

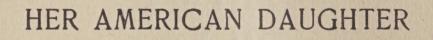


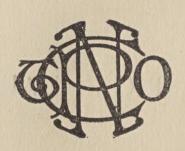
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HER AMERICAN DAUGHTER

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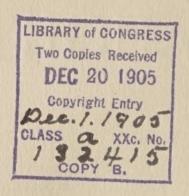
ANNIE T. COLCOCK

"MARGARET TUDOR"

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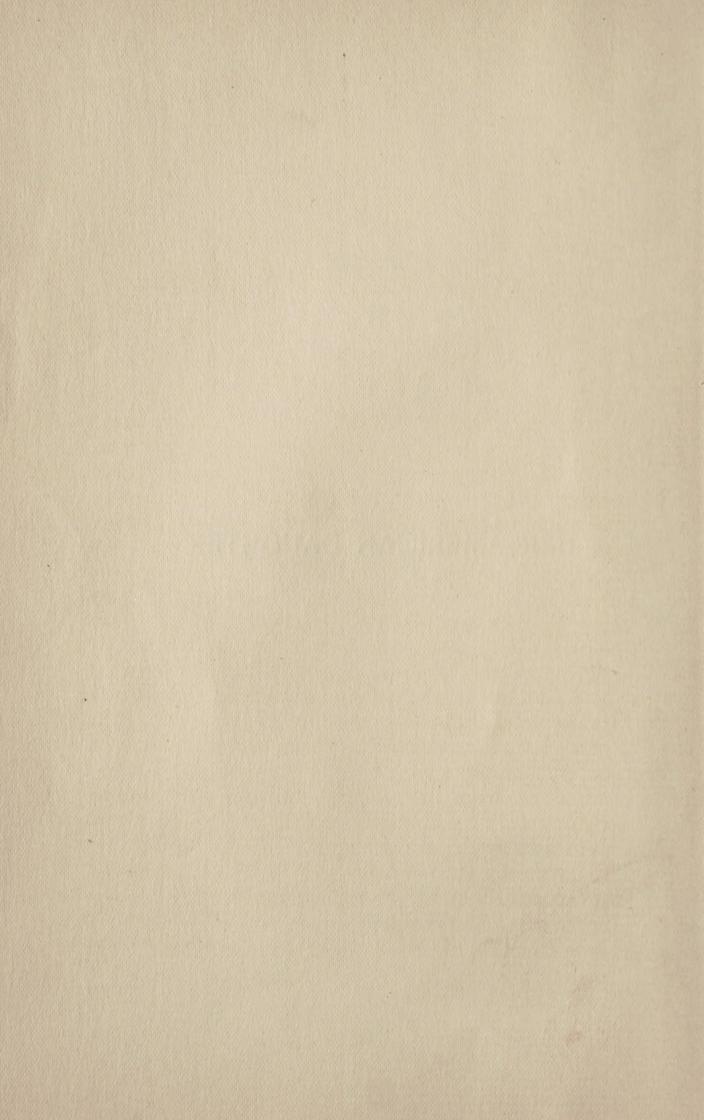
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HER AMERICAN DAUGHTER



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CHAPTER I

Out of Tangier, to the westward, meanders a road—a rugged, dusty road—that bridges the shallows of a pebbly stream brawling by the city gate, winds its way round naked boulders upstanding in the midst of tropic verdure, cuts so sharply through green hillocks that the banks on either hand are always caving and slipping, and the gold-brown soil atop trickling darkly down the sandy slopes; then clambers up and up—past wretched mud huts thatched with straw and hedged about with prickly pear, past the whitewashed dwellings of wealthy Jews and Moors, the villas and walled gardens of the foreign legations—upward and upward still, through fragrant orange groves to the summit of Mt. Washington.

Viewed from that height, all the surrounding country appears strangely broken, as though turned up in furrows by a giant plow. The hillsides in the foreground are a vivid emerald, but they grow bluer and bluer as they roll away in the distance, till at last they melt into the sky. The town of Tangier—a crowded mass of white and yellow buildings—nes-

tles in the hollow of the bay. Beyond lie the Straits of Gibraltar—an expanse of shimmering green; and far, far away, smoke colored and dim, rise the hilly shores of Spain.

For the sake of this wide outlook, strangers are frequently induced to follow the rugged roadway either afoot or on horse-, mule- or donkey-back, vehicles of any description being hardly obtainable; and at the time when our story opens—which is an afternoon in the latter part of January, 1896,—two young Americans, mounted on small gray burros and attended by native donkey boys, were just starting out to make the ascent.

Across the narrow bridge rode a tall youth whose long legs almost touched the ground on either side of his diminutive steed; beside him ran a lad with a sharp stick, who prodded the donkey from time to time when its pace began to fail, and as the trio scampered along they raised a little cloud of dust

that glittered in the yellow sunlight.

Behind and with an ever-lengthening space between, the second rider—a girl of about twenty-one—trotted more sedately. She and her young attendant were both very good to look upon, yet the contrast between them was as wide as the east is far from the west. The donkey boy's features were clear-cut and regular, his skin was a golden brown with red blood mantling the cheeks, his eyes were black, and so was his close-cropped hair. His dress consisted chiefly of a brown, hooded *gehab*, half slipping from the shoulders and reaching down below the knees; beneath this he wore a braided crimson vest, and on his

head was a red fez with a full blue silk tassel; the wide sleeves of his loose upper garment fell to his wrists, but his bare brown ankles showed above the heelless yellow sandals on his feet. And the girl, whose slim figure was clad in the fashion of her day, whose fair young face was all unveiled to the warm glare and the glance of men, smiled down at him in open friendliness.

"You live Noo Yok?" queried the boy as he swung along beside the burro, one hand sunk caressingly in its shaggy mane. "You live Noo Yok?" he repeated, craning his neck to catch a glimpse of the rider's countenance.

"N-no-o," she quavered in a laughing tremolo, "my home is in as sunny a clime as yours—and I hope I may live to return there, but this . . . is the pace . . . that kills! Why this indecorous haste, Mohammed? The mountain has awaited us some centuries already; wherefore, O prophet, I beseech thee to restrain the ardor of thine ass!"

"Yeh!" exclaimed Mohammed, with cheerful acquiescence. "You lak he go fas'? Rrrrah! Rrrrrrah!" and he used his sharp prod with such fatal result that the rough canvas pads which balanced each other across the donkey's spine swayed and rocked alarmingly.

The girl, who sat sideways with her small feet dangling unsupported, her right hand clutching the hempen rein and her left vainly seeking anchorage on Mohammed's shoulder, gasped an hysterical remonstrance. "Prophet . . . thing of evil! Prophet still . . . if boy or . . . devil! Make your donkey . . . stop!"

"Sh! Ssh!" cried a voice behind her on the road-

side, and the burro suddenly came to a halt.

With feminine ingratitude, his rider, shifting round on her primitive saddle, turned a flushed and indignant face to the stranger in her pathway. Two mutinous gray eyes challenged his right to command her silence, two soft red lips curved proudly, and despite the bewildering fluff of bronze-brown hair shaken loose and ripppling round her forehead it was a very stern countenance that confronted Eliot Russell as he approached the donkey's head.

Lifting his hat gravely, he said: "Pardon me! But your donkey boy has evidently omitted to give you the usual instructions. In the language to which your steed is accustomed, *Sh!* is equivalent to *Whoa!*"

"Oh, is it?" she murmured, comprehension and apology blending rosily in her half-averted face. "You should have told me that, Mohammed."

"Ah theenk you want go fas' lak heem," said the boy quite innocently, pointing as he spoke to the rider in advance of them, whose burro trotted forward at such a rapid gait that his guide had much ado to keep abreast of it.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the girl, administering a few restorative pats to her loosened hairpins. "I am very much obliged to you," she added, turning graciously to her preserver. "At first I mistook your friendly intervention for a reproof to my un-

guarded speech."

Russell smiled. "If I may venture so far, I would like to suggest that while your escort could never have heard of Edgar Poe, his limited vocabulary is very likely to include certain profane expressions, so your future quotations might be more prudently selected."

"You are right," she said. "I might have given serious offense. Thank you again," and she gathered up the hempen reins between her fingers, preparatory to another start.

"In case you should ever want to mend your pace, you must say *Rrrrah!*" added Russell, with an excellent imitation of the guttural cry in common use.

"And Balàak! means 'Clear the way!"

"Indeed?" replied the girl, a sparkle of mischief lighting her gray eyes: "Let me see. I suppose—by way of illustration—it would now be correct to say *Rrrah!* to the donkey and *Balaak!* to you?"

"Quite correct," he admitted briefly; and once more raising his soft felt hat, he stepped aside out of

her path.

Immediately the burro waggled its long ears and trotted off, with Mohammed at its heels; and the girl, looking back over her shoulder, waved her hand in a laughing farewell to the man, who stood bareheaded in the sunshine.

CHAPTER II

The sun had gone down behind the hills; from the mueddin towers the city had been summoned to prayer, and now within every mosque could be heard the chanting of the faithful; but the civilization of our western world had lit its torches in the crooked little streets, for here and there along the walls electric bulbs glowed opalescent through the violet dusk.

Down one of the narrow alleys passed two young

men in earnest conversation.

"I've been anticipating this recall ever since we started for Fez," the younger of these was saying. "It ought to have reached me a week ago—that's the worst of these God-forsaken regions! I'm awfully sorry, Russell, but you see yourself how it is—I must take the next steamer home."

"Of course, if your presence there is requisite," agreed his companion. "But it's hard lines having your holiday cut short,—and I need not tell you, Thornton, what the loss of a kindred spirit means to me."

The other man laughed shortly. "What troubles me most, my dear fellow, is not that, much as my vanity may overestimate it. I am thinking of the other complication."

"What complication?" demanded Russell.

"My sister Isabel. She hates having her plans upset—by other people. She would have all the universe revolving staidly in orbits of her own appointing, while she performed erratic flights at unexpected moments in contravention of all celestial or terrestrial laws."

Russell's silence breathed disapproval, and his friend, perceiving it, laid one hand upon his arm in

affectionate protest.

"You think I'm severe. You believe in your heart that I have never properly appreciated Isabel—although, with the rest of the family, I have figured constantly in the tail of the comet ever since poor Dering's death. The attraction of a pretty, over-indulged woman, my dear Russell, is sometimes too coercive for the comfort of her immediate circle—as you might better understand if you had ever had a sister of your own."

They had now reached the door of their hotel, so Russell was spared a reply; but as he followed his companion into the dining room his thoughts were busy with Mrs. Dering. Although he had seen little of her since her marriage and widowhood, he remembered her as a very charming girl, and the

brother's attitude struck him as disloyal.

Besides the long table at which he and Thornton took their places, there were two others, each seating about twenty persons—all of them utter strangers, for tourists seldom linger more than a day or two in Tangier, and Russell and his friend had only that morning returned from a two weeks' excursion through the interior of the country. As his quiet

glance swept over the assembled company without encountering one familiar face, he became subconsciously aware of a disappointment. Since afternoon it had been in his mind that he would probably discover among his fellow-guests the owner of a pair of mocking gray eyes, but evidently she was stopping at the other hotel.

Scarcely had he arrived at this conclusion, however, when two ladies entered the room and seated themselves in the only unoccupied chairs at his own table. One of them was a colorless little person of uncertain age; the other was a slim young creature in a dark blue gown, whom he recognized at once, although the expression of her face was now wholly serious. As their eyes met across the table, she bowed sedately, and he decided that her gravity became her. But it quickly passed, for she was soon engaged in an animated conversation with her immediate neighbors—a brown-bearded man of distinctly pleasing appearance and an overgrown youth with a dimple in his chin. Snatches of their talk came to Russell at intervals during the meal, and Thornton found in him a very inattentive hearer. Finally, perceiving the cause, he broke off in the middle of an argument, demanding: "Who's that pretty girl just going out?"

"I wish I knew," replied his friend, pushing aside his coffee cup with impatience and joining in the general exodus from the dining room. But he reached the hall too late for more than a fleeting glimpse of a dark blue gown disappearing up the

winding stairway.

He was now both piqued and disappointed. Without being a conceited man, he had seen too much of the world—and the women of it—not to have a just appreciation of his own attractive personality, and he had fancied that the girl would make it easier for him. The hall below was filled with knots of people, most of them sociably inclined; conventions count for so little on the outskirts of civilization, and one cannot afford to shut oneself away from all pleasant companionship just for lack of a common friend to pronounce the open sesame.

Opposition, however, stimulates desire. He bethought him next of the two men who had evidently been of the same party, and pacing slowly down the hall he perceived the brown-bearded man in consultation with the office clerk, while the tall boy with the dimpled chin stood by with both hands in his pockets and a cigarette between his laughing lips. There was something very prepossessing about

this young fellow.

She called him Peter. Peter what? wondered Russell, and the hotel register naturally suggesting itself, he sauntered over to the desk and studied the arrivals of the week. There was but one Peter among them all, and his signature was boldly scrawled across the page: Peter Harding, Rhode Island, U. S. A. Two lines above were registered Henry Stafford and wife, New York; and just between, in a feminine hand, Raven Woodward, Charleston, South Carolina. At the moment when Russell's finger paused beneath this name, Thornton leaned over his shoulder.

"Well," said the latter carelessly.

"This must be she," declared Russell with conviction.

"Who?" asked Thornton obtusely; but his companion closed the book without further explanation.

"I've just been re-reading Isabel's letter," said the younger man, as they strolled to the open doorway with their cigars. The air outside was as mild as a night in spring, and the sky was of that purplish black which one sees so often in southern latitudes.

"She is still in Paris?" Russell inquired.

"Yes: but she is leaving this week. I doubt if a letter would have time to reach her there."

"And your failure to meet her in Madrid will be

a disappointment."

"Oh, the disappointment's a trifle. What worries me is that she and Aunt Elizabeth may attempt to carry out their original program without me."

"Would there be any objection to that?"
Thornton hesitated. "Why—do you really think it would be advisable at the present crisis for two women to travel alone all over southern Spain? Suppose the clamor of our Cuban sympathizers terminates in some official action that inflames the Spaniards!-If Isabel were not so self-willed and obstinate-"

"It seems to me," Russell hastily put in, "that with her aunt, her courier and her maid she would be safe enough. But in case of any real emergency, you may be sure, Thornton, that your father's daughter will never need a protector while I am within reach of her."

The brow of the younger man instantly cleared. "I thought you would say that! It seems a shame to impose my responsibilities on you, but I must go home immediately, and this question of Isabel's movements was a load on my mind. Of course, it is unlikely that any trouble will arise in the next month or two, but if it should—"

"I give you my promise that Mrs. Dering shall have my escort and protection as far as the Spanish frontier."

"My dear fellow, I don't know how to thank you! It was too much to ask of your friendship for me, but for my father's sake—"

"For your sister's own sake I shall be only too glad to be of any service," insisted Russell cordially. "I shall probably return to Madrid by the first of February—and I wish I were half as sure of Mrs. Dering's welcome as I used to be of little Isabel Thornton's in my college days."

"You were always a favorite of hers," said the brother smiling; and then silence fell between them—a silence in which all the dissonances of the night were audible.

"I must go to Gibraltar to-morrow morning," Thornton remarked presently. "The steamer is due there next day. I suppose I can count on your com-

pany as far as the Rock?"

"Why, of course," returned Russell. "I have nothing to keep me here." But even as he spoke there came to him, unbidden, a fleeting memory of the girl in blue. Outside in the street, amid the babel of the city's noises, certain sounds grew more insistent—the high screeching of wind instruments, the clash and clang of discordant cymbals and the hollow rattle of a toneless drum. Nearer and nearer they came, voices mingling with them, and hoof beats, and the shuffle of sandalled feet.

"A Moorish wedding procession, ladies and gentlemen!" cried the voice of the hotel guide.

At this announcement the idlers in the hall crowded to the doorway, and in another moment Peter of the dimpled chin was at Russell's elbow: it was the chance for which the latter had been waiting.

"Take my place," he remarked, as the wedding company approached. "I have been long enough in Morocco for such sights to lose something of their novelty. In a country where the average man has three or four wives, they are apt to be rather frequent."

"Thanks, awfully," said the boy. "But isn't it curious! Is the poor bride shut up in that ridicu-

lous birdcage?"

"I believe so," Russell answered, and then con-

versation became impossible.

At the head of the clamorous throng, borne on the back of a patient mule, was the birdcage to which Peter had referred—a tiny palanquin hung with red and yellow curtains; next followed a man with a torch of sputtering candles, and after him trooped the musicians, making the night hideous. "What a concord of sweet sounds!" Thornton ejaculated. "Russell, do you think a taste for this sort of thing would be incompatible with treason?"

But, quickly as it had come, the procession passed on and disappeared around a corner, where the uncouth sounds, imprisoned between narrowing walls, grew faint and muffled. In the lull that followed, the guide's professional tones could be heard

going on with a glib recital.

"—and the bride, a girl of fourteen or fifteen, is being carried from mosque to mosque to be blessed before entering the home of her future husband. To-morrow morning some of her family will pay him a visit to inquire if she comes up to specifications; if so, a gun will be fired by way of salute; but if the husband has reason to think he has made a bad bargain, the lady may be returned to her relatives. And at any time during their wedded life a writ of divorce may be obtained from the lawyers for about forty reals—or two dollars in American money."

"Miss Ray ought to be here," murmured Peter, as the speaker paused for breath. "She's lost the opportunity of her life! You haven't met Miss Woodward yet, have you? She's the girl that sits next to me at table. I remember seeing you at din-

ner,-perhaps you noticed us?"

Russell confessed that he had.

"This was the opportunity of her life," the boy repeated, "and if she'd been here you bet she wouldn't have let it slip! She's a South Carolinian, Miss Ray is; and if that guide had given her half a chance, she'd have capped his story with the remark that the only two places on earth where divorce is not permitted by law are South Carolina and—I forget the other, but it doesn't matter. South Carolina's the thing! The sun rises and sets there."

"Oh, does it?" laughed Thornton, who had overheard. "Well, I have no objection, and although Russell here was born at the Hub, I think he is fast degenerating into a cosmopolitan—such is the ill

effect of travel!"

"I don't believe it will have any such effect on Miss Ray!" declared Peter. "You ought to hear her talk! I'll introduce you to-morrow morning," he added patronizingly.

"Thank you," said both men with becoming grat-

itude.

"I'm sorry to say we've got to leave here to-morrow," Peter continued. "We are going back to Gib. en route for Madrid. We came over on the Gebal Tarik, three days ago—" and he rattled on for some minutes more, describing with humorous touches their experiences in Tangier. But Russell lent only half an ear to this chatter; he was thinking that for once fate was strangely complaisant.

At the breakfast table next morning Peter fulfilled his promise, but the meal was too hurried for conversation and Miss Woodward appeared preoccu-

pied.

In Henry Stafford, however, Russell identified a New York painter of some slight repute, so he was not surprised later on to encounter him with color box and brushes sketching busily in an angle of the old town wall. Through a low arch, glimpses could be had of the Sok—or market-place, crowded with strange figures, tents and booths, in the centre of which a group of kneeling camels were resting after a fifteen days' journey across the desert and through the hills. As the artist pointed out to his companion some striking bit of color, or the felicitous grouping of the figures near the gateway, his rather melancholy brown eyes were lit by an expression which to Russell was something of a surprise.

"That man"—he thought, after they had parted company—"has been capable of real enthusiasms, but he gives me the impression of a person in whom the wine of life has all turned flat." Then, as a memory of the Southern girl rose up in striking contrast, a slow smile crept around his own grave lips; but much as he was inclined to admire her happy effervescence, he wondered, like a wise man, what might be the quality of the spirit beneath it. "One rarely discovers a nature that is sweet and wholesome to the very lees," he decided; then his thoughts were all devoted to the task of threading the labyrinth of crooked streets.

The one in which he found himself had been described by Peter the night before as "exactly one donkey wide." It was darkened here and there by an overhanging story that completely shut out the heavens; but wherever the morning beams could find their way the plastered walls were bathed in a white glow. Just before him, at the intersection of another street, was a small sunny court; as he

approached it a chorus of shrill voices reached his ear, and what he presently saw made him quicken

his pace to a run.

In the centre of a group of turbulent children stood Mohammed, the young donkey driver, with a scowl on his handsome face and a stout stick in his right hand; an angry woman, whose vituperative energy had disarranged the folds of her white haik enough to disclose a shrewish countenance, cursed and threatened the lad from a doorway opposite, and on the other side of the court, standing with her back against the wall, an open sketchbook in one hand and a pencil pressed dubiously against her chin, was the girl in blue. Her expression of amused perplexity gave place to unmistakable relief as Russell appeared.

"May I ask the meaning of all this?" he inquired, a hasty survey convincing him that she was unac-

companied.

"Too much zeal," she answered, laughing. "There is such a thing as having too warm a champion! I was sitting on yonder doorstep, sketching in peace—if not in comfort—with half the small boys in Tangier looking over my shoulders, when Nemesis overtook me in the person of Mohammed. He fell upon my tormentors with wrath unbounded and ordered them to instantly balaak! They naturally resented it."

"Very naturally," he concurred, with meaning.

A sudden blush overspread her cheeks, for one moment contrition was plainly visible in the gray eyes — then laughter overflowed them. Russell

smiled back at her—the inscrutable masculine smile which is intended to cloak a half reluctant admiration, and consulting his watch observed that it was eleven o'clock, that the boat was scheduled to leave at noon, so there would be no more time for sketch-

ing.

"It doesn't matter," she replied serenely, as they turned their steps hotelward. "As Peter would say, I've done all the harm I can in one morning, I've filled three pages of my sketchbook with bad drawings, I've called on a sweet faced Moorish woman who permitted me to pry into her housekeeping arrangements, and I've instigated a street riot—all in two hours."

"Do you mean to say that you ventured alone

into one of these houses?" he gravely asked.

"Why certainly. It was the cleanest place, with whitewashed walls and blue tiled floors and dear little cupboards full of charming pottery. I sat on a rug and played with the baby, and felt that I was in another world—as real as my own, yet so different! That's the wonderful thing to me—these people are living their usual lives; it's not just a show arranged for our entertainment."

"Yes, it is all real enough," said Russell, "but not much of it is admirable, for Tangier is overrun with the offscourings of two continents. I don't think I quite approve—" he added presently, "of your going out alone and visiting in strange

houses."

She laughed at that, and studied him quizzically before replying. "Do you know, for a Northern

man—you are a Northerner, I suppose?—you remind me very much of a Charlestonian." He accepted this statement in silence, with another inscrutable smile; so, as they entered the hotel door, she paused a moment and faced him seriously. "It wouldn't have been inappropriate, just now," she declared, "if you had—thanked me."

Russell saw the gauntlet, but he let it lie, discreetly

saying: "I appreciate the compliment."

CHAPTER III

At half past twelve o'clock, the *Hercules*, an apoplectic little steamer, was puffing its way out toward the green waters of the Straits with six passengers aboard. There were no cabin accommodations whatever, so the tiny deck was encumbered with handbags and all the impedimenta which Russell and Thornton had accumulated during their journeyings. In one corner, partly sheltered from the wind by a narrow strip of awning, her pallid countenance wearing an expression of cheerful suffering, sat Mrs. Stafford. Her husband's campstool was beside her. But in the stern the four other passengers leaned over the rail with their faces to Tangier.

"I wonder — " mused Miss Woodward softly, "whether all other people are conscious of a pang when saying farewell to a place they are never likely to revisit. Because I can't help thinking now of the days that are yet coming to this quaint town, of the rising of the sun and the going down of the same, of the little round of customary things—all so strange to our western eyes—that will still go on and on,

though I am no longer here to see."

Russell, who was standing next to her, turned slightly so that he might look into her face and slowly quoted:

"'What will be will be well—for what is is well,
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall
be well.'"

Ray shifted her gaze a moment to meet his. "That sounds like Walt Whitman," she exclaimed.

"It is," said he.

"Ah," she sighed, "I haven't yet achieved that point of view. But *The Professor* would understand me when I say that just now *I am dying out of Tangier* and suffering the pangs of dissolution."

Russell was silent, observing the very real regret in the gray eyes; but Peter put in a word that broke the spell. "Sure an' you do make a beautiful corpse!" he cried, and the girl herself led the taugh that followed.

Hitherto, the day had been mild and cloudless; but now mountains of white cumuli were heaped on the horizon, and at intervals the blue overhead was darkened by gray scuds.

"If I were sailing in Charleston harbor, I would say, Look out for squalls!" remarked Ray with a weatherwise glance at the sky. She was buttoned up to the chin in a blue mackintosh and her hat was pulled well forward over her brow, but already the wind had loosened a tendril of the bronze-tinted hair and presently a stronger gust caught the brim of her hat and tossed it gaily over the rail. The three men each made valiant efforts to rescue it from a watery grave, but without success, and it disappeared at last in the trough of a green billow. For a second

or two its owner gazed after it with wide eyes of dismay, then she nonchalantly pulled forward the pointed hood of her mackintosh.

"Now you look like Mohammed in his gehab." said Peter, with frank disapproval. "A charming adaptation of the Tangerine fashion," amended Thornton. But Russell, after one glance into the depths of the disfiguring cowl, sauntered away with an air of utter indifference.

The captain of the *Hercules*, a surly old Englishman, had neither words nor smiles to waste upon his passengers; but the mate, who constituted the only visible portion of the crew, was a cheery Frenchman, small and lean and brown, with sharp black eyes and mustaches that curled fiercely in military fashion. To him had Peter paid court already; and now, as he chanced to pass the group in the stern, he paused long enough to point a knotty forefinger at a solitary red and black smokestack on the horizon line and to chuckle: "Voilà messieurs, you see ze navy of Morocco!"

"That man, I imagine, has something of a history," was Thornton's aside to Miss Woodward while Peter was putting a question. Ray nodded and then turned to listen to the mate's reply.

"Ven ve reach Gibraltar? Mon Dieu, how can I tell you zat! Tree hour, seex hour, ten hour—" and a shrug completed the sentence. "Zese Strait, zey is sometime in league vid ze debil! Ven you see cloud like zose—" he pointed upward, "prenez garde!"

"Russell, I fancy some of that fellow's experiences would furnish material for your pen," remarked

Thornton when the Frenchman had departed. Then, seeing Miss Woodward's look of inquiry, he added: "You didn't know we had a chiel amang us takin' notes, did you? Let me introduce him properly! Eliot Russell, Esquire—novelist, essayist and poet—

a contributor to all the leading magazines."

"Oh!" said Ray, "is he that Mr. Russell?" and for some moments she was silent, pondering. The name was familiar enough; it belonged to the author of a clever novel of American society which had made considerable stir the year before; but she had a later association with it—what it was she failed to recall,

though she puzzled over it considerably.

Meanwhile, the unfavorable prophecies were being rapidly fulfilled. The white clouds boiling up all around the horizon had risen to the zenith, completely obscuring the sun; they were no longer white, but leaden, with strange green shadows in their depths. And the waters of the Straits were growing black and foam-streaked; great waves tumbled about the little steamer, and now and then one of them would dash over the rail in a shower of spray.

Mrs. Stafford cowered under her awning with the same Spartan smile, but her lips were growing bluer; and when a few sullen drops splashed down from above, the anxiety of her husband was visibly increased. He succeeded, after considerable trouble, in arranging a temporary shelter of rugs, with which the first strong gust of wind made wicked sport; but, nothing daunted, he substituted his own arm for the inadequate fastening and kept his post manfully during the trying hours that followed.

It is not pleasant to sit upon a sloppy deck, with a chill wind blowing, and receive at intervals of thirty seconds a generous bath of cold salt spray. And when the heavens are in league with the unfriendly elements, when the rain pours down in sudden torrents or dribbles slowly with imbecile persistence, and a sinister fog creeps close and closer—it is a good time to test the stuff of which a woman is made. Russell, with his overcoat collar turned up and the brim of his hat turned down, glanced across at the slender figure in the dripping mackintosh and decided that Miss Woodward's temper was weather-proof.

A great wave had just uprisen beside the steamer's bow, had lifted high its crest like a monster of the sea and shaken its white mane all over the narrow deck. Ray had been the worst sufferer; involuntarily, she had turned to meet it, and a dash of cold spray had invaded the sheltering hood. With a burst of rippling laughter, she bent forward and

shook the water from her hair and face.

"That was too bad!" cried Thorton, proffering

sympathy and a fresh white handkerchief.

"It's my native element," she bubbled back. "We Charlestonians are all more or less amphibious!" Under the hood a riot of damp brown curls had broken loose, the delicately featured face was all aglow and the gray eyes had a glint of the seagreen waves. As through wet lashes she flashed a smile at them, Russell thought of rainbows—and then bit his lip by way of punishment for this lapse into senti-

mentality. But Thornton made no effort to conceal his admiration; he bent forward now with a meaning glance.

"Are you sure you haven't a fishtail concealed

under that mackintosh?"

"My ancestors, some seven generations ago, were of six different nationalities, but the Old Man of the Sea was not among them," she retorted.

Thornton was one of those men who enjoy talking to a pretty woman about herself almost as much as having her talk about him. He dealt largely in personalities, and owing to a pair of handsome brown eyes and an agreeable voice his most commonplace remarks had the effect of delicate compliments. "Six nationalities?" he exclaimed. "I wonder if I can find traces of them. Let me see. You have Irish eyes."

Russell shifted his campstool nearer to Peter. Really, he thought, at times Thornton was very much of an idiot!

But the girl in the mackintosh, who shivered now and then in dire discomfort, was grateful for the young man's friendly efforts at consolation, and she answered him gaily: "Do you think so? I've always supposed that my eyes were inherited from a Swiss great-great-grandmother, my mouth and chin from an English ancestor and my nose from a French Huguenot. I rather think the only Irish member is my tongue, which is always trying to break bounds and getting bitten for its pains."

Thornton laughed appreciatively, and began counting on his fingers: "English, French, Swiss, Irish—"

"Dutch and Scotch," finished Ray as he paused. "Take equal portions of the first and second, flavor slightly with the remaining four, shake together for two centuries—"

"And you have a good American." It was Russell who interrupted; there was a distinct challenge in his tone, and Ray felt it.

"I am a Southerner!" she answered quickly.

Peter laughed. "And she spells it with a capital S, too, while for all the other points of the compass a small letter is sufficient."

"And do you know why?" cried the girl with eyes alight. "Because there are no definite boundaries to the north and the east and the west: they are all relative terms. But Southerner—that means from Texas to Maryland, and nothing else. Ah! you can't understand the kinship that exists among all Southerners. We are one family—brothers of the blood! You-all, north of Mason and Dixon's line, are only step-relations; we don't feel bound to love you unless you are good!"

"See how much more charitable we are!" exclaimed Thornton, with a twitching lip. "We can't help

loving you under all circumstances."

But the little Southerner was on the war-path; memory had suddenly furnished her with a cue. "So you may say!" she retorted, "it's the fashion now to shake hands over the bloody chasm. But down in the bottom of your hearts is a germ of the sectional

feeling that existed long before the war, and that is liable to spring up again at any moment; your public men voice it, your journals reflect it! Oh! I hate the way some of you Yankees speak of us—"

Thornton lifted a protesting hand. "Hold there, Miss Woodward! We are not all Yankees. Take it out on Russell, if you like,—he comes from Boston; but I'm a New Yorker and an ardent admirer of everything Southern—present company not excepted!"

Already, however, Ray had begun to chastise the Irish member. She turned the conversation now with a smile and a gay retort, and a few minutes later she carried her stool across to Mrs. Stafford's side.

But Thornton's laughing words had probed very close to the truth. Nothing less than a desire to "take it out on Russell" had prompted her sudden outbreak; for, unless her memory was utterly at fault, his name was affixed to a magazine article that she had read on the voyage over,—had read with a strong sentiment of antagonism. It was entitled The Tidewater South Carolinian as an Element of the New South, and the writer's viewpoint was not calculated to commend him to the subjects of his criticism. Certain passages recurring to her, Ray felt the embers of her resentment heating rapidly, and if she could have been certain of his authorship her acquaintance with Russell might have ended then and there. For the present, however, she

decided to allow him the benefit of a doubt which a few hours would end—as the magazine was still in her steamer trunk at the hotel in Gibraltar.

Amid darkness, fog and rain, the *Hercules* finally dropped anchor in the shadow of the giant Rock—that patient, solemn monolith that mounts guard through the centuries at the gate of Europe. Tonight it wore, like Atlas, a wreath of cloud upon its brow; the black waters of the bay surged restlessly about its knees, but a girdle of jewels—the lighted windows of the town—gleamed brightly on the tired travelers as they disembarked.

On the pier, while Russell was defending Mrs. Stafford and Ray from the attacks of several too insistent porters, and the three other men were settling the boatmen's fares, they heard the evening gun boom sullenly. It was half past nine.

"Listen!" said Russell, "that's a gentle reminder

that we are now under martial rule."

"I've already received a sharper hint to the same effect," Ray laughingly admitted, "for a few days ago, when we first landed here, as we were taking a morning promenade about the town, I happened to linger innocently on a bridge overlooking some fortifications, and a horrid red-coated soldier poked his bayonet at me and said *Move on!* My American independence has been resenting that act of British tyranny ever since."

"Then you are sometimes an American—" began

Russell, when Thornton interrupted him.

"Mr. Stafford tells me that your party have rooms at the Bristol, and we have left our traps at the old

Royal Hotel; so I'm afraid this is goodbye for me, as I expect to sail for New York in the morning. Russell, here, has the consoling prospect of meeting you again in Madrid; and my sister, Mrs. Dering, will be there also—I must tell Isabel to look you up. Try not to forget me utterly, Miss Woodward, before you return to your ain countree—" he was shaking hands with her warmly, regretfully, "and I trust you will give me the opportunity of welcoming you on your arrival. A line to this address will always reach me—" and he relinquished her hand to explore his pocket and cardcase.

"Thank you," said Ray, sighing wistfully, "it is always pleasant to find a welcome at a journey's end; but I'm afraid I won't be able to claim mine for a long, long while. When we leave Madrid in the spring we are going to Paris for at least two years of hard study. If by that time I can't get into the Salon, I may go home again; but Peter vows to

remain till he has a picture on the line."

As she stood there in the dim light, a slim, bedraggled figure, the hood of her mackintosh pushed back and soft tendrils of her wet brown hair trailing like damp seaweed over her brow and colorless cheeks, she looked so pathetically young and forlorn—such a sad-eyed little mermaid cast up on the shore, in the midst of the press and struggle and the hard dry facts of life—that Russell felt a sudden impulse to gather her up in his arms and bear her away into some peaceful haven. Instead, however, he merely offered her his hand.

"Goodbye, Miss Woodward, we will meet again in Madrid."

"Goodbye," she answered briefly, and turning to Thornton wished him better weather on his next voyage.

A moment later, with Peter and the Staffords,

she was driving away to the hotel.

CHAPTER IV

The fifth piso of a certain tenement house in Madrid is a casa de huespedes. It is kept by an elderly Spanishwoman of the bourgeois class, whose modest business cards are printed in the name of Dolores Pacheco, with the addition below in much smaller type of the simple statement—Widow of Martinez. But although, according to local custom, Doña Dolores no longer bears the name of her dead husband, through all her strong and comely middle age she has had no thought of giving him a successor; for the memory of her José is still green in her heart. That heart of hers is very far from being tenantless, —what true woman's ever is?—but still the dearest guests are dreams of what might have been and memories of a happier past.

One afternoon, about three days after the events recorded in our last chapter, Doña Dolores was writing a letter—which she found a laborious task. Besides the scratching of her pen as it traveled across the flimsy sheet, the only sounds in the comedor were the loud ticking of the painted wooden clock on the side-board shelf and the purring of Michito—an innocent fluff of black and white kitten-

hood curled up on one end of the table.

The short winter day was beginning to fade; but through one of the narrow windows overlooking the court a rosy little sunbeam sidled in for a moment and flushed the old clock's garish face, then—as though dismayed by the lateness of the hour—it suddenly disappeared, and shadows began to gather in the corners of the room. Still the comely figure bent over the table, and the noisy pen, in the grasp of the cramped brown fingers, sputtered and scratched. The kitten dreamed, and purred in whispers; but the voice of the clock grew louder and more emphatic.

At last Dolores lifted her head, brushing away a soft lock of silver-gray hair that had fallen over her brow; a heavy sigh broke from her lips, the pen slipped from her fingers and she leaned back in her chair with lines of weary discouragement creeping out on her fine old face. Michito stopped purring, yawned, and suddenly uncoiling, put forth a curious paw and touched the red handle of the discarded pen as it rolled toward him; then, seized by some kittenish whim, he leaped down from the table and crept softly under the faded yellow portières that hung before a passage leading kitchenward. But the clock ticked on. And to Dolores it was saying, over and over:

"Seven pesetas a day, seven pesetas a day!"

With the sordid refrain ringing in her ears, she sat there, shut-eyed, and wrestled with her problem—the eternal problem of the poor,—how to make an insufficiency go farther still. Her own small income must be stretched to meet the wants of nine besides herself—and this was not the day of miraculous loaves and fishes! But here, at a swift conscience-stroke, her simple faith bestirred itself. Far be it

from her to doubt the power of the Blessed Virgin and the saints! Yet what had she ever done to merit miraculous assistance? Were there not thousands of others as hard pressed as she? An unreasonable irritation overcame her because at this of all seasons, when her house was nearly emptied of boarders, Pablo should have chosen to be laid up with a broken leg. Now there he was, with a poor sickly wife and seven children to be provided for, and none of them fit for work but a lad of seventeen! The thought of her sister-in-law's helplessness, and general incapacity for anything save the bearing of children, filled her with hot impatience. She blessed the saints that she had never been a drag upon José. While he lived, she had pinched and saved and eked out their scanty income by sewing from morning till night. And she had been saving and pinching ever since,-to what purpose? Two years ago, it was her sister's girl who married and set up housekeeping; before that, there had been the mortgage on Pablo's farm; and now, here was this new trouble. Whatever she laid by always went the same way—to supply other folks' needs and to feed other folks' children!

She glanced around the empty, silent room and sighed again, but the seven young nieces and nephews in Seville tugged strongly at her heart. Her promise of help was in that scrawled and blotted letter on the table, and somehow the money would have to be found.

"Seven pesetas a day! Seven pesetas! Seven pesetas!" ticked the clock, in warning tones.

There was the problem. The rent of her flat was just so much,—seven pesetas a day. Don Antonio paid her that for his board; Don Francisco did the same, and out of his seven pesetas must come three duros a month for Benita's wage, the money for the grocer, the butcher, the baker, the fees to the portero and the sereno, and the tithes which the priest unfailingly exacted. What would there be left to give away? There was no use trying to wring blood out of a stone!

She had taken up the letter to destroy it, when she heard the sound of hurried footsteps on the bare wooden stairs, and the bell rang briskly. Rising at once, she smoothed with one hand her silver pompadour, with the other brushed the front of her plain black gown, and then hurried out into the hall.

There was a small iron grating in the upper part of the thick paneled door that gave admittance to the flat, and through this Dolores peered curiously as she laid her hand upon the latch. A pair of laughing gray eyes looked straight back into hers; they were so close against the bars that she could see nothing else except a white brow and a fluff of bronzebrown hair escaping from beneath the brim of a simple walking hat. Dolores, being a Spanishwoman, instinctively condemned the masculine severity of the stranger's headgear. That the wearer must be a foreigner was her second thought, and swift upon this followed a hope that the Blessed Virgin had sent her a new lodger. Quickly she turned the key, shot back the bolt and set the door wide to the strangers. For there were two of them.

The owner of the gray eyes had been standing upon tiptoe, her hand on the doorbell; now, as she drew back on the landing, she lost several inches in height. In that respect her companion lacked nothing,—he was over six feet tall and had the chest of a young athlete, but his round, boyish face with its merry blue eyes, its laughing mouth and dimpled chin would have seemed more appropriately set above a child's beruffled collar than on the square shoulders that actually supported it. He held in one hand a small red book and a larger volume distended the pocket of his coat.

"Buenas tardes, señora," he said politely, and then proceeded to read aloud, with execrable accent: "Veo que tiene Usted cuartos para alquilar—"

"Hush! Peter, and let me talk," cried the girl, laying one hand across the page of *Polite Spanish Dialogues*. "My grammar may be sometimes defective, but at any rate I can understand both sides of the conversation! Señora," she continued, coloring warmly, "we are strangers in Madrid in search of board and lodging. Have you room for us—and for two friends of ours?"

The upturned face, the appealing eyes, the carefully constructed Spanish, went straight to Dolores' heart; she took the girl's hand in hers and tucked it under her arm. "Come in, señorita; my poor house is at your service! We will confer together, you and I; we can understand each other well,—is it not so? You are English, both of you? No? Americans? Better still! I like them much, the Americans. How long do you desire to remain in Madrid? Three

months, you say? Ah, what a clever Spanish tongue she has! In three months, señorita, we can talk much together; I will be profesora, yes, and we will make of you a perfect Spanishwoman,—shall we not?"

"I hope so," said the girl, tilting her head back-

ward and reflecting Dolores' smile.

"What's all this?" demanded Peter, halting on the threshold. "Miss Ray, have you asked her terms? Don't commit yourself to anything! She's an uncommonly handsome old lady, but rather too affectionate on such short acquaintance. If you look too pleased she may raise her prices! I don't trust any of these foreigners."

"Peter!" Ray turned on him indignantly, "your Yankee instincts are the destruction of all your finer sensibilities. Look at that face and dare to say you wouldn't trust her!" Then she clasped both hands over the older woman's arm. "Will you show

us your rooms, señora?"

"Come," said Dolores, and led her into the comedor—Peter marching behind with both hands in his pockets and dispassionate criticism in his eye.

The brief twilight had failed rapidly and the room was in semi-obscurity; but Dolores called for lights, and Benita, the pretty maid-servant, came a-tiptoe, with eyes dancing and white teeth gleaming, and threw coy glances at the tall young señor who said so little yet saw so much. She lit first the big lamp that hung over the dinner table and then a taper set in a tall brass candlestick. With this she led the way from room to room, and the others followed, Dolores talking briskly and Ray asking many questions at

the suggestion of Peter, who fluttered the pages of his Spanish lexicon and supplied on demand the deficiencies in his friend's vocabulary.

"This is vastly better than any other place we've seen," was the verdict from Ray, "so I hope Mrs. Stafford won't object to the stairs. There were six

flights, weren't there Peter?"

"Eighty-nine steps," he declared, "I counted them as we came up. However, we are all young enough to stand them. I'm rather favorably impressed myself," and he took appreciative note of the rosy lights on Benita's rounded chin as she set the taper down upon the table and puffed out the jet of flame.

"Does it please you?" asked Dolores anxiously.

"Oh, very much, señora-"

"Don't commit yourself!" warned Peter again. "Here's a sentence in the *Dialogues* that exactly fits! 'Mañana volveré para darle á Usted contestacion.'— Which means that tomorrow, Mrs. Stafford permitting, we'll come back and clinch the bargain!"

And return they did, bright and early, to the very great relief and satisfaction of Dolores, who promptly vowed a candle to the shrine of her patron saint. Before nightfall the whole party was installed under her roof; and, the next day, Ray despatched to her twin sister at home a letter which it will be our prerogative to read.

Madrid, January 25th, 1896.

My DEAR LOUISE:

Do you recollect, when we were a pair of very small children in pinafores and pigtails, how often on rainy winter days we used to take our favorite story books and set them up edgeways on the garret stairs, with the covers slightly open—like gates ajar, while we huddled on a lower step with our hands over our eyes and wished hard-or prayed?-that some dearly loved picture would "come alive" and walk out of the book to play with us, or that we might exchange places with any two of those complacent damsels on the page and frolic together "in picture land" when the book was closed to alien human eyes? Do you remember how an unfeeling Big Boy discovered this fond hope one day—and laughed at us? It was an offense I never quite forgave. But now I commission you to tell my brother-in-law that, verily, that miracle has happened! Either have I stepped between the pages of a wonderful book or else a whole realm of pictures has "come alive to play with me!" The illustrators were Murillo and Ribera, Goya and Velazquez; but their models still walk the streets. I dream for hours before the figures on some great canvas in the Royal Museumand then I go and talk to them on the street corner. Conceive of it if you can, a pictured world and a world of pictures! In only one respect do they differ from that painted country of our dreams; all is not beautiful, and the context does not tell us that "they lived happily forever after." Wherever there is the riot of color, the glitter of the torero's spangles or the picturesque draping of a mantilla, it reads like a romance; but the next page tells us of suffering, of sordid poverty. I have seen pictured deformity and painted sores, and I have met them on the sidewalk

and had them thrust in my very face!

I don't know yet whether I most hate it or love it—this wonderful Madrid,—this city of beggars and princes, of hovels and palaces, of dazzling sunny streets and dark cavernous rooms, where the people seem most at home when they are out of doors. find myself bewildered by its contrasts and its contradictions. It is far more modern in appearance than I expected to find it; in many particulars—such as street cars, electric lights and elevators (though the latter are hydraulic lifts that carry you up but refuse to bring you down) it is quite of the nineteenth century, even fin-de-siècle in occasional streaks. But this must be the result of an unconscious evolution on the part of these inanimate things, for the inhabitants all seem to belong to a bygone generation. It is a city full of Rip Van Winkles, who have slept for a century without growing any older, and awaking among modernized conditions appear unable to adjust themselves to the change.

But—to return to your sister Ray, in whom you are probably more interested—be assured that I am adjusting myself very comfortably to my new abode. I have unpacked my trunk, and now I am reveling in the sunshine that streams through the glass doors of my high French window.

This is a tenement house: the two lowest stories are occupied by a fashionable dry goods establishment, the proprietor of which lives on the piso

above; over him is a wine merchant and over the wine merchant are we! However, we have the satisfaction of living *under* a dressmaker, who occupies the attic suite (where we can but trust that she cultivates philosophy and so is enabled to congratulate herself on having nobody between her and the sun!)

These interesting details I gathered from Doña Dolores when she came in here a while ago to water the geraniums in the six inches of balcony outside my window. As she stood there among the flower pots, with the sunlight glistening on her silver hair, I wished so much that you could see her. Her eyes are black and brilliant, her complexion is of a clear olive tint, and her face is covered with a fine tracery of wrinkles that vanish now and then in lines of laughter. Her voice, even in conversation, has a timbre that thrills one; and if you could hear her feeding her pets (a round dozen of birds and an impish kitten called Michito) and crooning to them in soft love words and diminutives, you would think the Spanish language was the most musical in the world. I must tell you how we happened to discover her.

The afternoon of our arrival, Mrs. Stafford had a headache and Mr. Stafford was tracing a piece of luggage that had gone astray; so Peter and I, being of an economical and enterprising turn of mind, started out alone in search of lodgings. We obtained a long list of casas de huespedes and began what proved a most depressing tour of inspection. Some places were unspeakable—such an odor of garlic! such dingy rooms! such shrill voiced, slat-

ternly females! Others again were too dear. One stout señora in shiny black silk demanded even more than the hotels,—she doubtless expected us to bargain with her for less, but Peter read a valedictory from the phrase book which he always carries in his pocket and whisked me away before I had time to speak.

Night was coming on and we were completely tired out; but on our list was still another casa and thither we turned our steps. It was on the Calle Mayor, one of the main thoroughfares of the city, and only a few doors from the great square called the Puerta del Sol. We passed a row of plate glass windows draped in gorgeous stuffs and came to a huge brass-knockered door that yawned on the pavement. There we inquired of the portero—a brown gnome in spectacles—how we should find the Señora Pacheco's apartments. He pointed to the stairway at the end of the hall, turned on the electric lights that starred the ascent, and said: "Third floor."

The wooden steps were bare and uneven, worn by the tread of countless feet, and the hard knots, though they were polished smooth, bulged like cobble stones. We toiled up, breathless, for three weary flights, and then Peter shouted, "Look at that!"

On the plastered wall in large black letters was the word PRIMERO.

"I've counted forty steps already," he exclaimed disgustedly. "That word's an insult!"

Remembering suddenly the plate glass windows, I sat down on the landing and laughed, laughed that I might not cry. It was a breathless chuckle, Peter said, and he sat by me and laughed too. You'd like Peter; he hasn't a cross bone in his big, healthy body,

—in fact, I think he is all funny bone.

We made a race for it when we started again, and I got there first (by courtesy!) and pulled the bell. Dolores opened the door for us; and she was so tall and beautiful and motherly, and her rooms were so homelike and so clean, and the little brass bed in here seemed to say so coaxingly, "Come and rest, poor child!" that I just longed to tumble into it at once!

The atmosphere of this elevated boarding house is quite free of my two pet aversions—garlic and bohemianism. Despite the absence of the former, however, it is thoroughly Spanish. I realized that last night when we assembled for dinner in the comedor, where Benita, the maid, fluttered coquettishly around the fruit laden table, impartially sharing her smiles between Peter and our two fellow boarders-Don Antonio and Don Francisco. These caballeros, by the way, are quite unexceptionable elements: the former is an elderly man, well bred and deferential, with a spark of humor in his eye; the latter, a handsome young lieutenant, ardently polite, though regrettably gauche in his manner of eating. But the personality that dominates all others is that of She must be nearly sixty, there are moments when she looks quite that; and yet, in the glow of the shaded lamp last night, she was beautiful and young. . . .

CHAPTER V

To know all the cafés of Madrid with their characteristic features, the rank and quality of their patrons, the flavor of their tobacco, the brand or vintage of their popular beverages and the newspapers which are studied habitually at their tables, is to know the city itself. But the two which probably have the greatest prestige are those located directly opposite each other on the Calle de Alcalá, and to be a frequenter of either is to belong to a privileged class. Owing to their judicial attitude toward all matters social, artistic and literary, the wits of Madrid have dubbed them the "Congreso" and the "Senado." To the latter belong the patrons of the Café Suizo, where bald-headed conservatism-while decorously sipping its coffee or sherry—tries everything by the standard of a generation ago, and is returning home to bed at the hour when its neighbor over the way is at the meridian of its popularity. For the Café Fornos is haunted by young litterateurs, officials and students,-by all progressive, rich and gay Madrid that every night devours the Heraldo and the Correspondencia, discussing with youthful fervor all the questions of the moment, and weighing the merits of the popular singer, the latest writer, the most recent enterprise, the newest phrase. anecdote or bit of gossip in circulation.

When the other cafés begin to be deserted, the red baize doors that screen the main entrance of the Fornos are swinging ceaselessly to admit the stream of new arrivals coming in as usual to sup after the close of the theatre; and every little marble table has its regular waiter who recognizes his *clientèle* and gives to each one his accustomed seat. Therefore, when any one enters the Fornos alone, and ignorantly takes possession of any seat he pleases, he may perceive by the very distant glances of his neighbors that he has been guilty of a mistake: at the very least he has broken into a coterie uninvited.

It was his knowledge of this that caused a late comer one night to hesitate for some seconds before seating himself at one of the few tables that at halfpast eleven o'clock still remained empty, and as he was in the act of drawing back his chair he saw before him—reflected in one of the large mirrors that line the walls—a group of three young men approaching the same corner. Instantly removing his hand from the back of the chair, he turned toward them with a little gesture of apology; but one of the three, perceiving him to be a foreigner, politely disowned any prior right to that particular table and led his companions to the one beyond.

As they took their places with a careless greeting to the obsequious waiter, the stranger had a fair opportunity of studying them. Two were in military uniform; the third was a civilian, but his dress exhibited all the affectations and extravagances that mark the devotee of fashion. His face, too, although handsome enough, showed evidences of dissipation

in the unhealthy pallor of the cheek and the restlessness of the brilliant eyes. He wore, on the little finger of his right hand, a magnificent ring which flashed green fire as he lifted the bottle of Valdepeñas, set before him by the alert waiter, and poured a few drops into his glass.

"Shall we fill to Francisco's latest?" he inquired, smiling sarcastically at the younger of the two officers, who colored uncomfortably at the jeering tone, till the elder, with serene good humor, declared a willingness to stand sponsor for the lady's pretty

face.

It was to the courtesy of this third member of the group that the stranger was in debt, and he noted now that, while the younger officer's rank was only that of a lieutenant, this one wore the insignia of a captain in the Royal Guards and, in appearance, was undoubtedly the most aristocratic of the three.

"Come then, Francisco," exclaimed the first speaker, "here's to 'La Reina Americana' !- But what has that plebeian nation to do with queens?" He held his glass against the light and critically inspected its contents. "This is much too good to be thrown away on the health of any Yankee señorita. Pues! I give you a substitute in the new soubrette at the Teatro de la Comedia who has the neatest foot and ankle in Madrid!"

"To be thrown away!" echoed the lieutenant, turning with an embarrassed laugh to his brotherin-arms. "Don Teodoro reflects upon our taste, considering that he has never seen the young lady himself."

The civilian leaned back in his chair and yawned audibly behind his delicate ringed fingers. "The Americans, Francisco mio—" he was beginning, with cool familiarity, when the captain lightly touched his arm and, glancing significantly toward the solitary occupant of the next table, suggested a change of topic.

Five minutes later, Russell—for it was hepushed aside his empty cup and was quietly leaving the café; but near the door a chorus of voices greeted him warmly by name, and he was drawn, willingly enough, into one of the brightest tertulias that the Fornos boasted, composed of several literary men and young attachés of the foreign lega-

tions.

To the table which he had just vacated, the three young Spaniards moved over immediately with an air of proprietorship, the captain remarking that the stranger had been both courteous and considerate.

"Surprisingly so, if he is really an American," declared Don Teodoro with an eloquent shrug, "for as a nation they are vulgarly obtrusive and tenacious

of their rights."

"Not always, I assure you," Francisco interrupted. "In my experience the men have been well bred and the women modest and refined."

"In your experience," repeated Teodoro, with a slight stress on the pronoun and an insolent smile, "but my dear Francisco, has not that been rather limited—so far as Americans are concerned?"

The saving clause was added after an interval of sufficient length to send the hot blood to the temples

of the young man opposite, who was vaguely conscious that his military education had hardly sufficed to overcome the deficiencies of a provincial breeding. Again his brother officer came good-naturedly to his aid.

"Probably, cousin, your own experience has been no wider,—and at present Don Francisco has the advantage of us both in living under the same roof with the most piquant little Yankee I have ever seen. Such killing eyes, amigo mio! If a regiment of them were sent to Cuba on a filibustering expedition, I would back them against Weyler and his entire army."

Francisco shook his head dubiously. "But so

modest, my dear captain, so discreet!"

"Yes," agreed the other thoughtfully, "I believe the chief charm of the American señoritas is their perfect freedom in the society of men—up to a certain point, a fixed line which they never overstep."

"Vaya, Enrique, that is all nonsense!" laughed Teodoro, who had been blowing smoke rings with the proficiency of an expert. "All nonsense—if you will pardon my saying so," he repeated, dropping his right hand lightly on the marble slab with due regard for the glowing ash on the end of his Havana. "Women of all races are fundamentally the same: so long as they are young and beautiful their discretion is limited by the horizon of their duennas; and when youth and beauty fade, having no longer any temptations of their own, they play the dragon for their juniors."

"I protest, Teodoro, you are too sweeping. Because you are not over nice yourself in the company you keep is no reason why you should forget that we have mothers and sisters—and possibly sweethearts of our own!" cried the captain, striking his palm against the table with a great show of indignation.

The ash of Teodoro's cigar trembled and fell; but, beyond a regretful smile and a slight shrug of the shoulders, he made no comment.

"The American señorita—" ventured Francisco, quoting a recent assertion of Miss Woodward's, "is her own duenna."

"And like Cupid-" retorted the skeptic, "she

doubtless wears a bandage over her eyes."

The captain again took up the cudgels warmly. "I once had the good fortune to be intimate in an American family of refinement, but you—you are

arguing from idle prejudice."

Teodoro laughed; his amiability was of the kind that thrives best in a sulphurous atmosphere. "Let us not quarrel, Enrique mio, rather let us put this matter to a practical test. Is Francisco's pretty friend a fair type of the American señorita? She is, you think? Bueno! Then let us appoint her champion for the women of her nation, and I—even I, Teodoro—will enter the lists against her. I venture to say that in six months I could effectually shatter your pretty illusions. What say you, Francisco? She will be here but three months longer? Well, even that will be sufficient for me. I am willing to wager that without any conventional aids—without

even an introduction, I can place myself on such a familiar footing that she will consent to sup with me here at this table, at this hour of the night, in such company as I shall choose, unchaperoned. That, I imagine, will be rather overstepping the borders of even American propriety," and he laughed softly as

he lighted a fresh cigar.

It was then midnight, and the atmosphere of the café was so heavy with tobacco smoke that the rich gilding and frescoes of the ceiling could be but dimly seen, and the lights burned redly. The rows of little marble tables were extended into infinity by the mirrors around the walls, and nearly all of them were crowded; but only here and there amid all the sombre company of black coats occurred the brighter

note of a woman's gown.

In the cafés of the new régime, on the Puerta del Sol or the Carrera de San Jeronimo, which have special accommodations for ladies, and excel in French chocolate and biscuit-glacé, this disproportion is not so great. It is, of course, no impropriety for women suitably attended to patronize the Fornos after theatre hours; but its fair guests are in a very small minority, and late at night belong chiefly to the class which is willing to dispense altogether with the chaperon.

For a moment after Don Teodoro had given his challenge, the other two men were silent. An uneasy flush mounted to Francisco's brow, and he sincerely regretted bestowing on his fellow boarder the lavish encomiums which had brought about the present predicament. Truth to tell, Miss Woodward's stand-

ards of propriety were something of a mystery to him; he had seen her more than once go out with. Peter unattended, and he feared the possibility of a perfectly innocent acceptance of Don Teodoro's invitation, which—although much could be condoned in an American—would be apt to put her in an ugly light before some of the scandal loving gossips of the Fornos. He waited, therefore, in silence, for his companion to give the cue.

Don Enrique leaned forward across the table and looked the young civilian in the eye. "Because I wish your abominable vanity to receive a wholesome lesson, Teodoro, I will take your wager."

Francisco's brow cleared suddenly, but the other frowned with quick suspicion.

"Vamos! I must have fair play. If Francisco ever interferes, the wager is off—remember that! He must give us his word of honor to keep silence."

"As a gentleman and a soldier, caballero," cried the young lieutenant, coloring hotly, "how could I do otherwise?"

"And we are fortunate in having him to hold the stakes," said the senior officer, with a reassuring glance at his young comrade.

"Let them be large enough, then, to make the game exciting," urged the civilian, emptying his wineglass and refilling it twice in quick succession. "There must be something to lend spice to the adventure, for the lady's charms alone may prove insufficient—I haven't seen her yet."

"I can point her out to you some afternoon on the Puerta del Sol," proposed Francisco. "She passes there constantly on her way to and from the Royal Museum."

"Agreed," said the other. "Now what shall the stakes be?—Stay, I have it! We both hold lottery tickets for the sorteo on the first of May—what do you say, Enrique? Shall we stake our chances on the lady?"

"With all my heart," cried the captain promptly, "I've never had the luck to draw a centimo in my

life, but I live in hope."

The two gray-green slips were laid on the table before Francisco, who called for writing materials; and after sealing them both in one envelope and endorsing that carefully, he proceeded to write out, for each party to the wager, a signed memorandum of the number of his ticket.

"The beauty of this—" remarked Teodoro, with the zest of a born gambler, "is that we multiply our chances. Ordinarily, we have about one hundred in thirty thousand of winning anything at all. Now I may draw a prize on Enriqué's ticket, or my own, or even on both—"

"Granting that they are not waste paper as usual, you are far more likely to *lose* on both!" exclaimed the officer. "Anyhow, you multiply the cons as well as the pros."

"For you, perhaps," said Teodoro shrewdly, "your part in the wager being a passive one. But I have also a few other points in my favor—" and he

waved an airy gesture toward the mirror at his side.

"Confound you!" laughed Enrique, "if you are not the most incorrigible coxcomb in Madrid."

Francisco now laid aside his pen. "This is yours, Don Teodoro, 11,003." Then presenting to his brother officer a similar paper, he remarked: "Rather a happy combination, my dear captain,—nine thousand, nine hundred and eighty-one. The first two figures are multiples of the last pair and the whole is divisible by nine: it ought to be a lucky number."

"So I thought when I bought it," the captain acknowledged, much to the amusement of the young civilian.

"If that is your system, cousin, I'm not surprised that you never win anything. Try mine—it's vastly better. Carlota Velasco, the pretty little glove dealer on the Arenal, has always a few lottery tickets on sale, and every month she reserves the first of her block for me."

"And what commission do you allow Doña Carlota for her trouble in the matter?" asked the captain gravely.

Teodoro caressed his black mustache with a significant smile. "My dear Enrique—" he protested, "that is altogether my affair."

"If that is your system," retorted the other, "I'm not surprised that you never win anything. You know the old adage concerning those who are lucky in love."

"But I drew five hundred duros last December,—so you see, amigo mio, that favoritism is not unknown upon Olympus."

Don Enrique leaned back in his chair with an air of exasperation. "Say, rather, that the devil takes care of his own!"

About one o'clock the coterie which Russell had joined began to disintegrate, and soon he himself withdrew in company with a young French newspaper correspondent who had been sitting next to him during the evening. Outside the café they paused a moment, in the dark and silent street, to glance in through the wide plate glass windows at

the bright scene they had just left.

By this time about two-thirds of the tables were abandoned, and in the deserted corners, a sleepy looking waiter was extinguishing the lights, so that the illumination might be proportionate to the guests remaining. Of these, a goodly number would linger on for an hour or more; indeed, it usually happened that the first pallid streaks of daylight were beginning to whiten the eastern sky when, through the little man-hole in the heavy barred doors, the last of the convivial party crept out from the heated, close interior, tainted with the fumes of stale tobacco, into the still, cold freshness of the morning air.

"Tell me—" said Russell suddenly to his companion, "you seem to know the names of everybody in Madrid,—who are those three young men sitting

at that corner table?"

"You mean the two officers and that young lechuguino, as the Spaniards would call him,—a macaroni—dandy—fop—what is your latest English word? Yes, I know them all by sight, and with two I have even a slight acquaintance. As for the third, he is nobody in particular, a young lieutenant detailed here to drill recruits—the raw material from the surrounding provinces who understand as much about handling a rifle as they do about the true origin of this miserable Cuban war. The officer in epaulets and the—the *dude* are cousins, the last scions of a noble house, Don Enrique and Don Teodoro de Silvela."

"They are very different in appearance."

"And the unlikeness is more than skin deep. Don Enrique is a man of high character—generous, quixotic and at all times the soul of honor. But Teodoro—well, you can see for yourself what stuff he is made of—un beau garçon who would ruin his best friend at cards or betray the woman who trusted him."

Russell's brow contracted in a sudden frown, and his eyes—which could at will be gravely tender, humorous or sternly cold—flashed a keen glance now through the plate glass window. To his companion he said no more on the subject, but in his own thoughts rose an insistent question that haunted him long after he had returned to his hotel: What did that fellow mean by "La Reina Americana"? There were very few Americans now in Madrid.

CHAPTER VI

"I'm all ready, Peter."

That youth, appearing in the doorway of the señora's dining room, fell into an attitude of admiration as he caught sight of Ray, sitting patiently beside the table.

"My, what a swell you are! In the local idiom, I

am at your feet."

"With equal truth, sir, I kiss your hand," and she threw a laugh at him—a jocund trill, that was the natural expression of her holiday mood, the frank

admission of her holiday attire.

"I like your sombrero," said Peter, walking round her, his hands in his pockets and his head on one side, inspecting with the familiarity of a brother and the privilege of an artist the delicate profile under the wide black hat.

"So does the señora,—she says it is 'mas gracioso' than the one I usually wear."

"And your frock—"

"Don't be silly, Peter; you've seen it a dozen times."

"Well, you have quite an elegant appearance for a struggling art student. It must be the gloves, spick and span, aren't they?"

Ray extended two slender pearl colored hands for his inspection. "Bought this morning of Doña Carlota Velasco, the presiding genius of a glove shop on the Arenal, who is as pretty—to use your favorite simile—as pink shoes. I recommend her to your most noble patronage."

"I can't afford to buy new gloves till I begin to economize on pins," said Peter with a conscious laugh, as he drew forth a paper from his pocket and tossed it in the centre of the table. "That's my fourth this week."

Ray's eyebrows traveled upward, and she chanted saucily:

"'I'll buy from you a paper of pins, For that's the way that love begins; But I'll not marry you, you, you—But I'll not marry you!"

Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Don Pedro?"

"Nonsense!" cried the boy, "when it comes to falling in *love*—" He dropped into a chair beside her and began an impatient tattoo on the long bare table.

"Here's our chaperon at last. Come and be admired, Mrs. Stafford, Peter is very susceptible to fine clothes."

Mrs. Stafford smiled. There was always something pathetic in Mrs. Stafford's smiles,—the kind of pathos one finds in the bleached roses of a last Easter's bonnet when they reappear in a brave but transparent pretense at springtime freshness and festivity.

"Peter looks very nice himself," she said kindly. "Are you excited, Ray, at the prospect of meeting some Americans again?" "I am more excited at the thought of drinking a cup of tea, for I haven't tasted anything but coffee since I came to Spain. Isn't Mr. Stafford coming with us?".

"I'm sorry," explained his wife, as they began the long descent to the street, "but you know he isn't fond of meeting strangers. He was afraid there would be a lot of tourists there—people who talk art

in quotations from the guide book."

"I hope not," said Ray carelessly, "but we needn't discuss art at all; we can talk about Cook's tickets and hotels and the mysterious scales at all railway stations that accuse one's trunks of accumulating additional pounds on the journey even as a ship does barnacles.—How very dismal this long passage is in the afternoon!—Now, Peter, if you only could find us a pumpkin, six fat mice and a couple of green lizards, we might ride away in state."

Outside, drawn up along the sidewalk, were a line of cabs, each with the sign Se Alquila—To Hire. The cocheros were nodding in their seats, with their blankets tucked well around their knees and their coat collars turned up as a protection against the

biting wind.

"Which shall I hail?" asked Peter, "the one in the shiny stovepipe hat with the pretense at a cockade?"

"By all means; it might pass for a livery in the dark—for it will be night by the time we reach there."

"To the American Minister's," he loftily commanded as they took their seats, but the cochero shook his head uncomprehendingly. "Just give him the street and number," advised Mrs. Stafford sensibly.

But Peter had his own ideas. "It's his business to know," he said, and shouted again: "El Ministro Americano!—I say, Miss Ray, what's the Spanish for Star Spangled Banner?"

"Numero veintiuno, Calle Serrano," she responded innocently; and when he had repeated the words after her the cochero cracked his whip and started off at a rattling pace.

"I thought that would fetch him," Peter said complacently, and then he wondered why the others

laughed.

It was cold, a crisp dry cold that brought the red blood into the cheeks of the boy and girl and whitened the lips of the older woman, who shivered slightly and drew back into a corner.

"Shall we close the glasses?" asked Ray quickly. "Thank you, dear; I'm not so warm blooded as you and Peter," and she smiled faintly,—the exuberant life of these two often stung her into consciousness of her own fading youth. For her there was no possible aftermath to the brief hour of bloom that had won the love of her artist husband when she herself was a girl student at the League. It had come after a colorless childhood, as suddenly as spring in the wan woods, with a soft flush in the cheek and a shimmer in the pale yellow hair. But in her brief married life she had had to assume so large a share of the burden and heat of the day that the prettiness had vanished suddenly, just as wild flower petals fall.

When the cochero turned into the Calle Serrano, another carriage wheeled into line behind him and drew up also before the residence of the American Minister. Our three artists had traversed the lower hall and entered the elevator when the occupants of the second vehicle alighted, but as the elevator ascended Peter caught a glimpse of them, on the threshold.

"I do believe that's Mr. Russell! I didn't know he was in Madrid.—What luck to meet him here!" he added cheerily, and Mrs. Stafford warmly echoed him; but the third member of the party maintained a profound silence till they were ushered into the presence of their hostess.

The room was filled with the sibilant murmur of English-speaking voices and the fragrance of English tea. While responding to greetings and introductions, Ray was acutely conscious that the portières behind her were drawn aside to admit more visitors; but despite a gentle nudge from her companion, she refrained from looking around.

"I told you so," persisted Peter. "I knew it was Russell. My! but he has a pretty girl in tow! Now that's the sort of woman I admire."

Turning then, she perceived that two ladies had accompanied the author; one was quite elderly, but the other appeared to be not more than twenty-five. She was richly dressed in very slight mourning, and despite Peter's known susceptibility to "fine clothes" Ray acquitted him now of any such reasons for his

naive outburst, the attractiveness of the wearer's face and figure being quite independent of her silks and chiffons.

In the reassignment of seats attendant on the arrival of these guests and the departure of some others, Ray found herself on a sofa beside this stranger with Peter in rapturous propinquity. Across the room, Mr. Russell was tête à tête with Mrs. Stafford; but while he listened to the kindly platitudes of his companion, his eyes frequently wan-

dered to the group of young people opposite.

Between himself and the little Southerner had flashed a single glance of recognition—one of those swift and subtle looks that at the moment seem so eloquent yet are so open to misconstruction. Russell's was intended to signify pleasure in the encounter, but no surprise; it was as though he had declared: Yes, we have met by chance, but without it I would have found you again. Ray, however, while her eyes said, Is it you? had thrilled with resentment,for this was the man whose printed words had stung her to the very quick. So it happened that, as their glances met, the vivid thought in each mind blinded it to the message of the other; and while the man contented himself for the present with her bright blush and grave regard, the girl was wishing herself out of his sight. Her cheeks burned painfully, a big lump rose in her throat, and with a rush of homesickness she realized that there was no one at hand to whom she could turn for sympathy—not even her friend Peter, for his too was the alien viewpoint. Her own was incomprehensible except to those who

had grown up from childhood under the same conditions. The generation that was born in the South during the period of reconstruction came into the world without a country. But it was too much to ask of the ardent young that all their devotion should be paid at the shrine of a lost cause, and many to whom a broad patriotism was denied found an outlet for their enthusiasm in love of home, pride of family and loyalty to their native State. Our heroine was one of these, and Russell in his severe criticism of the tidewater section of South Carolina had trampled ruthlessly upon her tenderest feelings.

"I have heard so much about you, Miss Woodward," it was the stranger who opened the conversation. "My brother wrote me from Gibraltar—the most entertaining epistle I have ever received from Hal!—giving me a full account of your voyage together on that wretched steamer. According to him, you were a delicious combination of an artist, a sea maid and an unreconstructed rebel—" she broke off there, arching her delicate brows apologetically. "Fancy my venturing to tell you so! But really, I've been looking forward with such pleasure to meeting you—all of you," and she included Peter with a gracious gesture and a very charming smile.

Ray, however, was quite unmoved by the evident friendliness in the pretty, well bred tones; her pride had been too recently wounded, and she wondered if Mrs. Dering's interest was not entirely due to curiosity. Was it because she, Ray, belonged to a new species?

"I think," she answered in a chilling voice, "you will find us too much like other people to be at all interesting."

"Oh, I have known artists before," cried the other gaily, "and they are always charming company. They seem to get the cream of everything, wherever the go. Now we commonplace individuals do our sightseeing in a perfunctory way; we live in hotels and we meet the traveling public instead of getting into the life of the people whose country we are supposed to be 'doing.' That's the worst of a courier," she continued with a helpless sigh, "no doubt ours is as good as the average, but of course he is in league with the Philistines; so we have traveled the beaten track of the tourist, from Paris to Madrid, and seen the conventional thing and paid the customary fee and met a lot of tiresome people and altogether had an abominably dull time.—Why didn't you persuade Hal to come on with you? I'm sure he only needed a little persuasion."

Ray opened her gray eyes with a puzzled stare. "You mean Mr. Thornton? Why, I hardly knew him at all."

"Oh, I supposed you had seen a great deal of each other. He had to go home on business,—or so he said. Hal thinks himself a very important member of the firm, but everybody knows his partners attend to everything,—he might just as well have stayed another month. We had planned such a lovely tour through the south of Spain. Did you stop anywhere on your way up?"

"Only at Cordova," Peter replied.

"You see we don't belong to the traveling public," added Ray in explanation,—she was rapidly thawing. "We don't see half the conventional things, I am sorry to say. Our work was before us in the gallery here and we couldn't afford to lose any more time."

"You are studying Velazquez, of course,—a magnificent collection, isn't it! You've been here about a fortnight, I believe. Have you made many acquaintances?"

The two young artists exchanged glances of amusement. "Not exactly among the haute noblesse," said the girl demurely, and Peter had just begun to explain that they were on terms of intimacy with quite a large circle of beggars and small tradespeople when another voice interrupted him.

"May I drink my tea in this good company?"

It was Russell who spoke, and Ray's laughing face changed suddenly as though a breath of icy wind had blown across it; but Mrs. Dering looked up with a welcoming smile. "These are old friends of yours, so introductions are unnecessary."

"Yes—" he drew up a chair before the sofa and sat down with his cup of tea, "I was just telling Mrs. Stafford that when I arrived in Madrid three days ago I called immediately at your hotel, but you had

moved away without leaving an address."

"So we did!" cried Peter. "But you know our headquarters are the Royal Museum; you can find us there every day up to one o'clock—visitors are

always welcome," and his blue eyes made bold appeal to Mrs. Dering, who smiled indulgently and promised him an early call.

All this while, Ray had remained silent; she was striving to realize that the pleasant sunburned countenance of the man before her, which memory had often reproduced against a background of blue, Tangerine sky, belonged to the author of that magazine article. The liking with which he had at first inspired her made his offense the more difficult to pardon. He was gravely watching her now, as he stirred his tea, and it became necessary for her to make some remark to bridge the awkward silence. A great longing had arisen in her to call him straightway to account, and it was with a distinct effort that she substituted some trite comments on the climate of Madrid.

Russell looked surprised but responded in kind,

and presently the conversation languished.

On the other side of her, Peter, in the hands of the clever society woman, was being drawn out; Ray overheard snatches of the most naive confessions and minute descriptions of the señora's ménage. Her opposite neighbor began to manifest a desire to join Mrs. Dering in her cross examination, and this again forced the girl into speech—for she had no idea of allowing the conversation to become general while Peter was in this communicative mood.

Resting her cup on her lap, she took a hasty survey of the room and began somewhat at random. "How impossible it would be to guess from this interior the nationality of our entertainers! It is quite as much Spanish as American, and there is absolutely nothing to betray partisanship or individual preference."

"True," said Russell, "but what else could you expect? Diplomatic hospitality must be noncommittal, as it were. The less it has of individuality the less chance there is of offending foreign prejudice. And the envoy of a government that is even now debating a recognition of Cuban belligerency needs to be more than commonly discreet."

"But I think what struck me was just that—the necessity they are under of playing a part, of sub-ordinating their personal likes and dislikes to the

national policy. How irksome it must be!"

"No doubt," agreed Russell, "but even if we are not in the diplomatic service, a certain amount of self repression is necessary; society demands it of us."

"I think I must have still some primeval instincts," she quickly answered. "The world is wide, it ought to be big enough for me and the people with whom I have nothing in common. I want elbow room for my antipathies. Call me narrow minded and provincial, if you please," she added meaningly, "but I would rather live alone on a desert island than come in contact with those who differ with me on every vital question and who assume a hostile attitude toward me and mine!" Then she paused, half frightened at her own temerity.

Now it happened that Russell's article had appeared just at the time he was contemplating his visit to Morocco, when he had ordered all heavier mail matter to be forwarded to Madrid. It was now reposing quietly in his room at the hotel amid a heap

of other unopened magazines, and having been written and paid for over a year ago, it had quite faded from his memory. The problem which now

occupied his thoughts was the girl before him.

She was so thoroughly in earnest and as sure of her own standpoint as only the very young can be. Russell, having had about twelve more years' experience of life, believed that ere long she would come to see the wisdom of looking sometimes on the other side of things. But now, because she was a woman and as lovely as she was young, he smiled at her with a tender skepticism in his deep set eyes, and said:

"A hostile attitude? Personally you need never

fear that, I am sure."

Ray bit her lip; for the moment she was disarmed, yet unappeased,—if anything, she was more antagonistic. She felt like a child from whom a firm yet gentle hand had wrested away its weapon. Words failing her, she devoted herself to her cup of tea; and, in the pause that followed, Peter's voice

was distinctly audible.

"You see," he was saying, with a sly glance in the direction of his fellow student, "it's etiquette over here to address young ladies by their Christian names as soon as you meet them, so both the caballeros kept their ears open to hear what we called the señorita. She was christened Raven, you must know,—it's a family surname, but she's never called by it and she didn't fancy having it translated. Well, one night at dinner Don Francisco turned to me and remarked that as Rey was a masculine title in Spanish it would be more correct to call her Reina or Princesa. You'd suppose Miss Ray would have been

satisfied with that—but no, indeed! She spelt out her name for them and explained that it was the same as their word rayo. Whereupon Don Antonio declared that was better still—Rayo de Luz or Rayo de Sol, both were appropriate. So now she is either the Queen of their hearts or the Light and Sunshine! For she answers to all the names in turn."

"Of course it's absurd," exclaimed Miss Woodward, blushing warmly, for Russell had joined in the laugh against her, "but I don't feel any more ridiculous than Peter ought to do. He has been translated

into a Don Pedro!"

Mrs. Dering's eyebrows were mischievously raised. "Is that so inappropriate?" she asked. "Really, though, you have made me regret that I am already a translation—Isabel, you know, is the Spanish form of Elizabeth. But I can never realize the

identity of the two,—can you, Mr Russell?"

"Not in the least," he answered absently, for one word of Peter's story had carried him back to the Café Fornos and the scene of the night before; again he saw the dim lights, the hovering smoke, the trio of young men at the little marble table, and again he heard the mocking toast to "Francisco's latest—La Reina Americana!"

At a signal from Mrs. Stafford, Ray had risen; now, as she turned to Russell with a grave farewell, their eyes met for another misleading moment. What she perceived in his face was a new intelligence; and, interpreting that as a sudden comprehension of her attempted thrust, with swift compunction she drooped before him—it was so foreign to her gentle nature to say anything unkind. But he, manlike, read

another meaning in the downcast eyes. Was she one of those women to whom admiration is as the breath of life? He recalled her evident enjoyment of Thornton's attentions, and pictured vividly her encouragement of the young Spanish officer. "Francisco's latest! Bah!" and dropping her hand impatiently he turned away with his old indifferent air.

CHAPTER VII

"On a morning like this," thought Ray, as she leaned over her balcony, "who couldn't be happy?"

It was one of those crisp, clear days when the rarefied atmosphere of that high altitude glitters as though filled with the dust of powdered diamonds. The sky was of the soft and vivid blue that hangs low, like a velvet canopy draped above the city's roofs. Warm golden sunlight blazed upon all the upper balconies on the northern side of the Calle Mayor, but as Ray looked downward the windows below her were in as cold a shadow as the tall buildings across the street.

"It is good to be so high up," she thought. "We might be more stylish on a lower story, but we'd miss this morning illumination. There are always compensations," and she shut her eyes for a moment that she might feel the hot sunbeams beating on her closed lids. From the leaves of the señora's geraniums, the drying night dews came to her in a warm

and spicy breath.

Suddenly there was a gay rat-tat upon her door.

"Are you ready, Miss Ray? Shall I wait?"
"No, thank you, Peter. I have to enter a fresh canvas, and the secretary never comes before ten o'clock; so I'm going to write a letter before I go out."

"Good excuse," he shouted back, "but it cuts no ice with me. Streets full of caballeros—young lady without a chaperon—pretty speeches on the way!"

"Once upon a time," called Ray, "a Pot remarked to a Kettle: 'I should think, madam, you were too fond of the Kitchen Stove.' Said the Kettle to the Pot: 'Your complexion, sir, leads me to suspect that you have been there yourself!"—I'm glad your blushes are not sooty, Peter."

"Blushes! I don't know what you are driving at."

"Don't you? Well, listen!

'I'll buy from you a paper of pins, For that's the way that love begins—'"

The hall door closed with a noisy bang, and the girl on the balcony threw back her head and laughed. "Teasing Peter is like drinking champagne. That boy will never grow up—in spite of his six-feet-two." Then, with swift-coming seriousness: "I wonder if I seem over young for my age? When I think of Louise, with her two years of wifehood, and soon, perhaps—" she paused, with eyes grown wistful. "Oh, well, it's folly to be shaking the hourglass, for the sands are running all the time." With that she took up her writing tablet and sat down by the open window.

To the twin sister across the water were frequently despatched long, intimate letters which Ray loved to write. Nothing was hidden from Louise but the occasional moments of homesickness with which the young exile had to contend. All the brighter phases of her life and work were gaily re-

ported, every new acquaintance was faithfully portrayed; even the little black-eyed street vender of whom Peter bought his daily paper of pins, and the wrinkled old woman on the corner who sold bunches of wild blue violets for a "perra-grande" apiece, had figured in Ray's letters home. And this morning, in a few characteristic lines, she disposed of Mrs. Der-

ing.

She's pretty and wealthy and widowed," wrote the fluent pen, "but evidently not broken-hearted, or she wouldn't be spending all her days of mourning in extended European tours. Her face is a blond reflection of her brother (who, it seems, was vastly entertained by my idiosyncrasies) and there is about her an air of potential patronage that I don't like. She says—in a voice that suggests the little princess who yearned to make mud pies—that artists are always charming company; so I fancy we shall see more of her. But although she is hardly four years my senior, I don't think we shall drift into friendship. Mine, you know, is a constant soul; but she impresses me as a person who would demand the moon today and tomorrow be wearied of green cheese. And besides, her intimacy with Mr. Russell would make me reluctant to seek her companionship. You have had time, by now, to read that article of his, and I know it must have affected you just as it did me. Did I ever describe him? To give an honest, unprejudiced portrait would have been much easier at first, but I will paint him as fairly as I can. He is tall, quite tall, with a strong, well-knit frame and the free bearing of a man who has done a great

deal of his thinking out of doors. The student is betrayed only by his eyes and brow,—the latter being prominent and high, and seeming very white and transparent above the healthy tan laid on his cheeks and temples by the African sun. There is a look of conscious power in his clean shaven facewhich is rather fine than handsome. And although his lower lip is slightly sensitive, the lines of the mouth and the curve of the jaw are firm. He is calm and self-restrained but very determined, and strikes me as a man who is accustomed to seeing obstacles melt before him. I imagine that he would pursue at all hazards the course he had laid out; that he would walk up to the mouth of a cannon—if it happened to be in his path—and inquire, as he tapped it lightly with his finger: 'Who is the owner of this piece of artillery? I must trouble you to remove it; you are obstructing the public highway.' Another theory of mine in regard to him is that he has seen both the best and the worst of our sex. I fancy that his mother was a very good woman, and for her sake he reverences womanhood; but he is disposed to be rather critical of the vagrant females who cross his path. This one is decidedly ashamed of herself for being so outspoken last night! I am afraid, Louise, that I will never learn to think first and speak afterwards. As the Scriptures say, my tongue is a little member but a most unruly evil!"

Here the writer paused, her small mouth twisted in a penitent smile. Several minutes passed, during which a variety of expressions flitted across her face. With her hands clasped behind her head, she sat lost in a long revery until roused, at last, by a noise of hurrying feet in the street outside. The sounds increased and eventually drew her out again

on the balcony.

By this time the sun had climbed so much higher that the two lower tiers of windows were illumined, but none of its bright beams had reached the street below. There, the sidewalks were crowded with a throng of men and women and little children, all streaming toward the open Puerta del Sol. Ray wondered if a fire had occurred, and leaned out with anxious eyes.

All at once, some unseen obstacle checked the human tide; it overflowed from the pavements into the narrow street, eddied there uncertainly, and then divided into two great waves that rose again upon the sidewalks and remained motionless-a wall upon the right hand and upon the left. As the footsteps ceased, other sounds were audible,—a muffled drum beat, the shrill tones of a distant fife and the tramp, tramp of soldiers' feet. Ray wondered what it meant; she had often heard the strains of a brass band under her window—when the guard at the Royal Palace was relieved, but this was something different. Every window on the Calle Mayor was now crowded with spectators. In the balcony of the adjoining room appeared Benita and the old woman who came each morning to assist in the housework. To them Ray turned for information.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

Benita's blooming face had never looked so grave. "The soldiers, señorita."

"I know,—but what soldiers?"

A hand was laid upon her shoulder; Dolores had joined her on the balcony and was looking downward with eyes bright and tearless.

"Look!" she whispered.

Out from the Puerta del Sol. between the everthickening walls of human beings, wound a thin stream of blue uniforms—every man with his white knapsack slung across his shoulder. On they came, marching four abreast; but as they passed along the street, their ranks were broken by the tide of men and women that flowed into them, mingled, and surged onward in a solid mass of humanity. The music of the band could still be heard, but the tramp, tramp of the well trained feet was drowned by the pattering, stumbling footsteps of the throng.

"You ask what it means?" said Dolores, with a quaver in her voice. "I will tell you, señorita. It means misery and desolation; it means broken hearts and starving families; it means mothers weeping for their sons, and little ones crying for their fathers, and sweethearts and wives left desolate. They are going to the war, señorita,—these are only one thousand out of twenty thousand who have been conscripted and are to go this month to Cuba—to die of fever, or under the guns of the insurgents. See them, señorita,—they are mere boys, most of them! Some had never handled a gun till a few months ago. But if they are drawn, they have no choice; for very few can pay the money for a substitute."

The tears were running down Ray's cheeks; she pressed her hands together in a very passion of sympathy. This was war! This was what her own people had suffered just a few brief years before! So her grandmother had watched her eldest boy depart; so her mother had seen her only brother march away! As she looked at the women and children in the crowd below, the tears came faster and fell in bright drops amid the sweet geranium leaves. At the sight of one girlish figure in a gay colored shawl, walking arm in arm with a blue uniform, a quick sob broke from her lips. "Oh, señora!" she cried, "señora!" and clasped the older woman's hand in hers.

"Pobrecitos!" murmured Dolores, "pobrecitos!"

The band had passed on ahead and the procession moved by in silence, except for the hum of many voices that swelled now and then into a feeble cheer.

"Viva España!"

The señora drew a long, deep breath; her fine, expressive face was pale and drawn; she laid one toilworn hand upon her bosom and slowly whispered: "Mother of God, I thank thee—that I have no son!"

Like the passing of a storm, all the great collective tragedies of this world—in which thousands of hearts are wrung together in the same anguishladen moment—seem to convulse the very atmosphere. And now, while the sighs of a thousand mothers rose quivering through the ether, and the wind as it went by became vocal with farewells, —who could stand unshaken? who could listen

unmoved? It was a time in which the human heart was laid utterly bare; for in the fraternity of sorrow there are no secrets.

The old Spanishwoman sank down in a chair beside the window, and Ray knelt on the floor at her feet. The pathetic sight they had just witnessed had unfitted the girl for work; and besides, it would be quite late before the street below was emptied of the crowd. So she abandoned all thought of painting in the gallery that morning, and gave herself up wholly to the happiness of comforting and being comforted. To Dolores it was happiness also; her sore heart had been soothed by the tears of this young stranger, shed in sympathy for Spain, and now Ray's clinging arms, quivering lips and wet gray eyes all eloquent of pity, touched her to the core. She looked hungrily at the girl's flushed face, so pretty in spite of the disfiguring tear-stains, so rounded and so young, and leaning forward she smoothed the bright tumbled hair with a gentle touch.

"Señorita," she said, "if one who had the power came to me and bade me cut off my right hand if I desired a daughter such as you, I would straightway hold it forth and cry, Cortalo!" and putting back the sleeve from her firm brown wrist, she offered it as if

for sacrifice.

There was something dramatic in the low, even tones of the rich voice, in the tragic earnestness of the wistful black eyes, and impulsive Ray thrilled in response to it; for to the artist in her, as well as to the woman, it appealed. She seized the extended hand in both of hers and laid her lips against the

smooth bare arm. "Then take me for your daughter, señora, your little American daughter—if you will!"

It was graciously and tenderly done, and the warm southern heart of the young foreigner over-flowed, for the moment, with liking and admiration for this beautiful old Dolores, this simple and untutored woman of the people, who had withal so fine a dignity. But, gracious and tender as the words were meant to be, the childless woman winced beneath them.

"I thank you, señorita; but there is one word I can never hope to hear, in this world or the next!"

Then Ray understood. Still kneeling on the floor in the narrow patch of sunlight that yet remained before the open window, she held out both hands and whispered:

"Madre!"

A silence answered her,—silence, because Dolores had no voice for speech. At the sight of her face, with all its fine reserve broken by lines of suffering, Ray drew back conscience-stricken; she had not thought to give pain. But suddenly the black, rigid figure swooped downward and caught the girl in two strong arms, lifting her bodily from the floor. She was held close, so close that she could scarcely breathe, and kisses almost fierce in their passionate tenderness were pressed on lips and cheeks and hair.

"Hija mia!" murmured Dolores, rocking herself to and fro with her warm and unresisting burden. "My child—my little ray of sun!"

Then, for a moment, they were both absolutely still,—so still that Ray, with her cheek against the other's shoulder, could hear the quick beating of the strong old heart. Her own had suddenly grown calm and regular. As it often happens with those who act on momentary impulses, she was subject to quick revulsions of feeling, in which she questioned the sincerity of the preceding mood. Now, even as she yielded to the other's caresses, she was saying to herself, over and over: "Why did I do it! why did I do it!" She realized that she had stirred an emotion deeper than her own, and was vaguely troubled. It had been easy enough, with her sudden intuition of the heart hunger from which the señora suffered, to imagine herself-for one flashing instant —the long desired daughter of Dolores, and a wave of tenderness had gone out toward the silver-haired woman sitting there with empty arms: but the reaction had come as quickly; lying in those arms she questioned her own right to be there, and it seemed to her almost cruel.

CHAPTER VIII

It was one o'clock, the hour of almuerzo, as the Spaniards call the first substantial meal of the day. Punctual to the minute was Peter, who possessed that best of all timekeepers—a healthy appetite.

"Played hookey, didn't you?" he commented cheerfully, as Ray joined him at the table. "Been spooning with Dolores, Benita tells me. Never knew such a girl as you!—now-a-days if you are not flirting with the men you are making love to the women. I'm not so gone on the Spaniards as all that. Just give me a pretty girl from New York and I'll not care another fig for all your mantillas and black eyes.—By the way, we met Mrs. Dering at the gallery, and she's just the swellest thing in Madrid!"

"So she kept her promise."

"Yes, and she's coming soon to call on you and Mrs. Stafford."

"It is evidently her whim to be interested in us,— I suppose you told her what we expected to have for lunch?"

"Didn't know myself," replied Peter, on whom anything like sarcasm was thrown away, "but I hope it's something good, because Stafferd's bringing Mr. Russell home with him." At this announcement, the countenance of his neighbor fell, but unobserv-

antly he rattled on: "Benita, que tenemos por almuerzo?—I'm learning those Dialogues by heart, Miss Ray."

The maid, all smiles and dimples, began to recount the menu for his benefit, telling the dishes one by

one on her outspread fingers.

"Sopa de garbanzos."

"That's pease soup," translated Peter. "Tortilla de huevos."

"Omelet in a pie dish, seasoned with unexpected vegetables."

"Chuletas, legumbres, ensalada, pan, vino y

frutas."

"Chops, salad—Not so fast, preciosissima! Say it again and say it slowly." But Benita had departed,

blushing all over her dimples.

"Peter, you are learning too much Spanish for your good," declared Ray, with a laugh that was only half hearted. She was wondering if their harmonious circle was to be often invaded by a jarring element. If Mr. Stafford, who was painfully shy and unsocial by nature, had gone out of his way to offer hospitality, it indicated, on his part, an unusual degree of liking for the author; so she, herself, instead of having "elbow room for her antipathies," would be obliged to bury the hatchet for the sake of . . But must she? Would it be courtesy. . incumbent on her to put, metaphorically, the calumet to her lips? She so hated anything like hypocrisy.

The table gradually filled, but for once the customary flow of cheerful talk was lacking. Dolores came in, as usual, and took a chair in one corner of the room where she could direct the alert little waiting maid and forestall the wishes of her guests. This was her invariable custom,—she never sat down at her own board. Mrs. Stafford presided at the head, Don Antonio occupied the foot and Ray's seat was opposite Mr. Stafford and the young Spanish officer, with Peter on her left hand. Today a third chair had been placed on that side for the expected guest; and, just as Benita was bringing in the soup, he arrived,

in company with his host.

In their bearing the two men were a striking contrast. Mr. Stafford, although quite as tall as the other, was stoop-shouldered, and his step had lost all its youthful spring. He carried the word failure writ large upon his face, in which he did himself injustice; but it is hard for a man, even when he knows his work to be worthy, to hold up his head while all the world's praise passes him by. A word of appreciation means much to these desponding souls, and it was just by the spontaneous tribute of an intelligent criticism that Russell had won his gratitude that morning.

They had met in the street, the successful author and the discouraged artist. Russell had greeted him with evident pleasure, had then turned his steps in the same direction, and, in the course of a brief conversation, had shown himself acquainted with the shibboleths of the other's world and conversant with the names of many who had won recent triumphs. Finally, with kindly diplomacy, he had harked back to a picture of Stafford's own that had won commendatory notice in New York the year before. It was done with the tact that comes only to a man of generous spirit who has made human nature his con-

stant study; but back of the motive, which Stafford recognized, lay the fact that the picture had really made a clear impress on the author's memory.

This thought lay warm at the heart of the painter all that morning. As he conversed quietly with his guest he seemed to expand more and more beneath the other's appreciation; and Mrs. Stafford, whose instincts were never at fault where her husband was concerned, left the conversation chiefly in his hands, well content to see the furrows in his brow smooth themselves slowly and the lines of his face relax.

But the trio at the head of the table had the talk all to themselves; for, with the exception of Peter whose whole mind was concentrated in the effort to catch Benita's eye and make his peace—the others were absorbed in their own thoughts.

The two Spaniards were both visibly depressed. Don Francisco had many friends among the officers who had gone with their troops that morning by rail to Cadiz, whence they were to embark for Cuba; and Don Antonio, who held an under clerkship in the War Department, had also much cause for anxious thought. So, even had Ray been in the mood to respond to their customary gallantries, they would not have been forthcoming. The girl, herself, was unusually silent, divining something of the diverse hopes and interests, anxieties and fears that had met that day at the señora's table. Dolores, too, from her corner, said very little; after exchanging a brief word with her two countrymen on the subject nearest their hearts, she had leaned back in her chair,

sighing deeply, but keeping a tender watch over her adopted daughter, on whose plate the food was

scarcely touched.

Peter, however, was not one to hide his light long under a bushel; having achieved his end in bringing Benita's dimples into lively play, he was able to join in the discussion at the upper end of the table. One of his chief charms was the courage with which he proclaimed his convictions: where angels would have been abashed, he rushed in undaunted and carried the field with utter rout. Mr. Stafford seldom argued with him; in fact, the older man, realizing how time was slipping away from himself, held youth in highest reverence. Peter was already a promising student; best of all, he was young: all things might be possible to him.

And now, as the boy carelessly summed up in his gay young voice all the questions under discussion, Mr. Russell was intensely amused. He attempted what Mrs. Dering had done the night before, and with like success; for Peter was only too ready to make the company a present of all his latest theories.

Even Ray lent an ear when he took the floor.

"These are the days of specialists," he was saying, "of specialists even in art. A man must take up one kind of thing and stick to it. He may spend his life in the manufacture of a particular type of female beauty—same pretty model every time, you know, dressed up new in the latest style; or he may take any old landscape and reproduce it a thousand times with assorted cloud effects; or he may paint one flock of sheep — sheep by daylight and sheep by night, sheep in the sun or sheep in the snow, sheep

"My dear Peter," she exclaimed, "your Yankee instincts are continually cropping out. You are not

talking art now, you are talking trade."

"Eh?" said the boy, in some surprise; for there had been an unfamiliar note in her voice and, though she laughed, her eyes were serious. Mr. Russell likewise studied her with a puzzled smile which broadened mirthfully as he turned to Peter.

"Well, Mr. Harding, what do you intend to make

your specialty?"

"Swell yachts and swell girls," was the prompt reply, and his choice was pronounced eminently fit-

ting.

At this point, the two Spaniards withdrew; each, as he rose from the table, bowing low, with a "Buen provecho!" to the company. Mrs. Stafford commented on their gravity, and Ray briefly explained the cause, describing the scene of the morning.

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Russell, "some of Weyler's forces, I suppose. The arrival at Havana of the Alphonso XIII with the new governor general of Cuba was cabled only this morning. What a terrible tax on Spain must these continual reënforcements be! Already, they say, she has in the field more than three times as many men as in the Ten Years' War, and still the conscriptions go on. This young lieutenant, Don Francisco, is detailed here to drill recruits,—so I've been told," and he glanced down the table at Miss Woodward, who had relapsed into her former gravity. In her manner throughout the meal he had surprised none of the coquetry which he had expected in "Francisco's latest."

Mr. Stafford had been pondering. "I think," he suggested, "we must be more careful, henceforth, never to bring up any political questions at this

table.

"But they don't understand English, do they?" Russell asked.

"They say not; but we would necessarily use some names that were intelligible, and while their country is in such sore straits it would be very galling to them to sit at meat with strangers who appeared to discuss their troubles in a flippant or unsympathetic spirit."

"That's so," said Peter heartily, and Ray's eyes glistened, while Russell—as he commended the artist's thoughtfulness in a few simple words—felt more drawn toward him than he had been at any

moment during their brief acquaintance.

Soon after this, the party started out on their separate ways; Mr. Russell going to his hotel and the

four artists to their own private studio, on the top story of a large building near the Royal Museum, where they usually worked from native models in the afternoon.

The "pose" was nearly over. On the model throne was a picturesque figure in a long cloak of brown frieze, stained by the action of the sun and rain, along the shoulders and the outer edges of each fold, to mellow shades of olive green. The same weatherbeaten tints were in the tattered felt hat that covered the gray hair, and the long beard that rippled over the ragged linen of the shirt was grizzled by many winters. Short breeches, faded to the general tone of the costume, were closed at the knee with a row of loops and buttons; woolen stockings of a dingy blue covered the shrunken calves, and on the feet were well worn brogues tied with little bits of string. But there was an ineffable something in the draping of the cloak, in the tilt of the sombrero, in the occasional lighting of the dull black eyes that, for Ray, spelled caballero. The old man sat with his left hand resting jauntily upon his hip, while with the knotted fingers of his right he held his shabby cane across his knees. As Ray watched him from behind her easel, she found herself wondering at the ingrained pride of this people, reflected even in their language which requires the use of the ceremonious third person in almost all forms of address, so that one must greet the very beggar on the street as "his honor" and add a señor or caballero to the close of every sentence. Plainly—she thought, with an odd rush of sympathy—this was more than empty form: it

was rooted deep in the national characteristic; for even in a case like this, neither age nor poverty could utterly obliterate that air *caballeroso* which is the birthright of the Spaniard.

As she mused thus, Mr. Stafford came behind her and studied her sketch with a critical eye. "That's not bad," he said, "but don't go day dreaming just as you are about to add your most vital touches."

Ray looked up with a laugh and a quick flush. "Thank you!" she returned, and added: "It's my first study from this model."

"Well, tomorrow's ought to be better still."

"I hope it may be no worse!" she sighed. "You know, for me 'black Monday' comes in the middle of the week."

Mr. Stafford reprovingly shook his head. "It's a pity your enthusiasms are so short lived, for while they last they are productive of good results."

"Oh, it isn't that I lose interest!" cried Ray, and then broke off with a gesture of mute despondency.

As the older artist turned away and began strapping up his color box, his wife immediately rose and deposited her small canvas with its face against the wall; then, as she and Ray cleaned their palettes into the paint bucket in the corner, she whispered softly: "I've been wanting a word with you, dear, ever since dinner."

"With me?" and Ray stiffened slightly, for confidential whispers from Mrs. Stafford were usually the prelude to a reproof.

"It's about Peter. So often, lately, I've heard you

call him a Yankee."

"Well, isn't he a Yankee? Wasn't he born in Rhode Island and didn't he live there until his increasing size compelled them to export him? I'd like to know where in the world you could find a Yanker Yankee than Peter is!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Stafford, "I thought I would give you a friendly hint; but of course, if you prefer to go on hurting the boy's feelings—" and she turned away with an air of renouncing all fur-

ther responsibility.

Ray scrubbed vigorously at her palette until she heard the door open and close, after which she crossed the room nonchalantly and glanced over Peter's shoulder.

"Say!" exclaimed that youth. "Stafford thinks this hand is out of drawing, and I do believe he's right! I'd like to correct it while the paint is fresh.—Won't you bargain with the old fellow for fifteen minutes more?"

The old man had descended from the model throne and was stretching himself painfully, but when Ray spoke to him he lifted his battered sombrero with quite a courtly air. As Peter took a small silver piece from his pocket and made signs, which Ray translated, his dull eyes brightened perceptibly; then, with a gesture of fine indifference, he remounted the platform and settled back into his former attitude.

For the next few minutes Ray stood motionless at Peter's elbow. Mrs. Stafford's idea was absurd,

but—

"Peter," she exclaimed suddenly, "have I been rubbing your feelings the wrong way ever since we came to Madrid?" "Eh?" said Peter, with a brush between his teeth.

"Mrs. Stafford says so."

"What the 'nation—" began Peter wonderingly, and then stopped dumbfounded, for the gray eyes

were melting.

"If it would be any satisfaction to you, Peter, you may call me a rebel—a darned Confederate rebel, if you like!" She threw back her head and laughed defiantly as she spoke, and Peter spent quite a half minute wondering what had become of the mist that had dimmed her eyes an instant earlier. Then he frowned and waved his palette impatiently.

"Mrs. Stafford's been talking rubbish! Don't

bother me with it!"

"And you really don't mind when I call you a Yankee?"

"Bosh!" grunted Peter politely. "Find me that

tube of Tierra Sevilla, please."

"Because you know, Peter," continued the girl, with a half laugh and a heightened color, as she bent over his paint box, "at lunch today you were only the—the scapegoat for other people,—a sort of vicarious sacrifice! So if I said anything disagreeable, you'd oblige me greatly by letting it go over your shoulder."

The boy's face became luminous, he wheeled round in his chair and chuckled: "So that's it, eh?"

"Yes, this is it," replied Ray demurely, extending a very sticky tube in the tips of her fingers. "Horrid stuff! I wonder at your using these Spanish colors," and she walked away serenely.

"Cheapest kind," mumbled Peter, with another brush bisecting his countenance; but his eyes were twinkling, and during the next ten minutes they continued to twinkle intermittently — whenever he glanced over his shoulder at the farthest corner of the studio where Ray was stretching a fresh canvas. Her black calico painting-apron swathed her from the hem of her skirt to the tip of her pink chin, but its ugly lines failed to disguise the youthful grace of the little figure kneeling, hammer in hand, on the floor. Presently, Peter laid aside his brushes and crossed over to her side, whistling Yankee Doodle in a bird-like treble and executing a double shuffle as he passed the model throne, at which the old Spaniard laughed feebly. "That'll do, old boy. Bastante, señor. Time's up! Take your money and propel yourself homeward.—I say, Miss Ray, what's the matter with Russell?"

With hammer poised in air, the girl hesitated. "I declare, Peter," she confessed at last, "it may seem a trivial thing to you; but you have no idea how much it hurts me—for at first I really liked Mr. Russell, he seemed just like one of our own people. You know—" she began to hammer vigorously, "besides writing books . . . he contributes to the magazines, and . . . some time ago . . . I happened to come across a very . . . disagreeable article of his . . . on South Carolinians."

"Not really!" said Peter, by way of encouragement, as she stopped to push in a refractory tack

with her thumb.

"You couldn't understand—no outsider could—how the tone of it, the cool, critical, superior, ungen-

erous tone of it annoyed me." She reached for a fresh tack and tipped over the whole box in her agitation.

"What did he say?" inquired Peter, looking down

at her with his hands in his pockets.

For a while Ray made no answer; her brows drew together and she shook her head dejectedly. "Half truths, Peter,—the hardest of all to rebut. To me the whole article seemed a superficial study of conditions without a fair inquiry into the causes underlying them. It was aimed at the conservative element in that particular section to which my people have belonged for generations—but the problem which faces our 'low country' involves too many. questions for me to explain in detail. I'm afraid we are not very progressive; we have always had a greater talent for spending money than for making it,—chiefly because we value it not at all for itself. And the things by which we set most store are what no money can buy.-I can never forget a little story that papa used to tell us," she paused a moment with clasped hands resting on her knees. "When he was a boy, he went one day to my grandfather with some childish purchase, saying: 'See, father, what a bargain I made today!' Grandfather turned to him gravely and laid a hand upon his head. 'A bargain! My son, never again let me hear that expression. To make a bargain means to obtain something at less than its value, -in other words, to defraud somebody else. I hope no child of mine will ever be guilty of such a thing!' . . . That was the sort of training, Peter, that our young men used to receive. And now, the question is: When the tide of so-called progress sweeps over us, what will it cost? American enterprise is a very fine thing,—but when all South Carolina gets to 'hustling,' and joins the rest of the country in its mad race after wealth, how many of our old ideals will go by the board? The New South may make larger fortunes and build up finer cities and exhibit more material growth, but I don't think it will ever produce any nobler type of manhood or of womanhood than the Old South had to show."

She took up her hammer again and resumed her work, while Peter watched her in thoughtful silence. Presently she added, with a flush of indignation: "But Mr. Russell thinks we make poor citizens."

Peter shook his head dubiously. "I guess you misunderstood him," he declared. "Southerners have always had the reputation of being pretty high toned and square, and all that. The principal fault to be found with them is their confounded hot temper, you know. They are always flaring up and getting mad at nothing."

Just then Ray's hammer slipped, and a wounded thumb closed the avenue of her retort. The last tack having been driven, she pushed aside the stretcher and rocked herself to and fro to ease the

pain.

"That's a good job," said Peter, in awkward sympathy; and with the toe of his boot he tapped the smoothly stretched canvas till it resounded. "Tight as a drum."

"And no thanks to you," she returned crossly, still nursing the bruised member.

"Eh?" cried Peter.

"I said No thanks to you!" repeated Ray, with her brow still puckered. "And I know one thing: there's not a man in all South Carolina who could stand up with his hands in his pockets and see a woman driving nails!"

"Tacks," corrected the literal Peter. "But really, you know, I didn't think you wanted me to interfere. You refused once before when I offered to. You never do let a fellow help at that sort of thing,—now

do you?"

"Of course I don't," said Ray, with a gay little laugh. "I'm proud of my independence.—But anyhow, you might have offered again," she added illogically. "Once in a while, even though one isn't doing woman's work, one likes other people to remember that one is a woman still!"

CHAPTER IX

Most men, up to the age of thirty five, regard love as a very possible influence in their lives; but if they arrive at that period unscathed by the little blind god, they begin to consider marriage a rather doubtful expedient. Eliot Russell was thirty three—and, so far, the One Woman had not been found. It must be confessed that he had sought her rather in fear than in hope; indeed, his had been rather a negative quest, and whenever he arrived anew at the decision, "It is not She!" he breathed a sigh of relief.

By his system of careful elimination, he had disproved the identity of any woman of his acquaintance with the ideal that dominated his imagination. That ideal was a composite of all the feminine qualities which he considered most admirable, and he had always believed that, were he to encounter it in the flesh, love would be a logical consequence. And now, as Miss Woodward—although she interested him greatly—was very far from embodying all those admirable and essential qualities, he concluded that it was solely from a professional standpoint that he regarded her: he was only studying her as a type, a somewhat new and original type of young girlhood,—for she would make such charming "copy," decided the author.

But there were two things that Russell quite failed to consider, or he would not have been so positive in regard to the limit of her attraction for him. One was a certain quality of his own—a usual accompaniment of strong and gentle manhood—the instinct of protectiveness; this had been the underlying motive for many of his actions, and therefore a potent factor in his life; out of it, for instance, had grown his friendship with Hal Thornton—which began in his senoir year at college while the other was a plucky little "fresh"—for, invariably, whatever was smaller or weaker than himself had aroused his instant championship. The other thing which Russell failed to consider was that unknown quantity which slips in—only Cupid knows how!—and upsets

the simplest calculations.

On the morning after his lunch with Mr. Stafford, he mounted the wide granite steps of the Royal Museum of Paintings with a definite aim in view. He was no stranger to this low, spacious building of brick and stone, with its world-famous collection of pictures, its immense halls, corridors and rotundas where one's footstep rang hollow and one's whisper woke the echoes; he had spent several weeks in Madrid during the preceding October and much of the time had been passed here, not for art's sake entirely—although he had a rare appreciation of it, —but for the pictured history, the enclopædia of costume to be seen and studied upon the walls. He was engaged, at present, upon a novel of the seventeenth century, the scene of which was to be laid chiefly in Spain, and all his travels and studies during the last four months had been for the purpose of gathering the necessary material. However, what had drawn him here this morning was only a strong desire to see the young art student at work in her natural environment.

Compared with the galleries of Paris or London, this one seemed almost forsaken; for, instead of the forest of easels obstructing the visitor's passage and the swarm of students copying busily, only a few native artists and an occasional foreigner were to be seen, scattered here and there over the vast building or congregated in groups near some of the most popular pictures. In each hall, a smiling but rather decrepit old guard (this was the asylum for many a worn-out soldier) presided over a brazier of hot ashes that but slightly modified the dungeon-like atmosphere of the place. The visitors, also, were few in number—a small party of tourists, who studied the pictures attentively with the aid of a guidebook, and several idle young men of the town, who loitered about, inspecting the artists curiously and making whispered comments on their work.

Russell wandered from room to room in quest of the little South Carolinian; and, at last, in one of the smaller, less frequented galleries, he discovered her. She was standing with both arms behind her back, her left hand clasping the slim wrist of her right, which loosely held a bit of soft charcoal that had smudged the crumpled pinkness of its out-turned palm. Her uncovered head with its coils of wavy, bronze-brown hair was tilted upward, her lips were parted slightly and her lifted eyes intent upon the

wall where several of Ribera's Apostles—powerfully painted, gaunt, dark and unlovely—were hung in a forbidding row. Upon an easel, near by, was her untouched canvas, and her hat and cloak rested on the back of a chair that held also her color-box and brushes.

So accustomed had she grown to the coming and going of curious onlookers that Russell's footsteps on the bare wooden floor approached quite near without disturbing her; she seemed as unaware of his presence as she was of the other two occupants of the room. These were the old blue-uniformed guard, nodding over his newspaper in the warm corner by the brazier, and a young man wrapped in a rich broadcloth capa, bordered down its front edges with wide bands of crimson velvet, who sat-or rather lounged with careless grace, his silk hat dangling from his hands-on one of the green plush benches against the wall, just about ten feet from where Ray was standing. His eyes, which had been fixed upon the girl, were turned indifferently toward the newcomer—who at once recognized the young civilian whom he had seen in the café, Don Teodoro de Silvela.

For a moment, the two men regarded each other coldly; then, as Russell went forward to the girl's side, the Spaniard rose, donned his hat and loitered away, stopping now and then to look at a picture on the wall or to throw a backward glance over his shoulder.

"Good morning, Miss Woodward!"

Ray turned suddenly. "Mr. Russell!" she exclaimed.

"I hope I didn't startle you," he said, "but you were so lost in the contemplation of those emaciated saints that I knew I couldn't rouse you without speaking."

She wondered what need there was of his doing either! And then—her innate gentleness making a rebuff impossible—she smiled. "Don't call them saints; to me they are simply types of human suffering. In most of them is visible real physical pain, but I find in none the exalted spirit of the martyr. They are all beggars—not Apostles."

Russell regarded her attentively, then he took a hasty survey of the walls. "There is nothing poverty stricken about that St. Peter yonder," he commented, "but I confess he is not my conception of the Galilean fisherman."

"He?" cried Ray, with a little shrug that was quite foreign in its expressiveness. "Oh, no! he's only a fat old Jew with the keys of his treasure—I detest him! But aren't the hands fine? and the texture of that stiff brown robe? I ought to have selected him to copy."

"Why should you?" asked Russell. "Is it a spe-

cial penance you are preparing for yourself?"

"Not exactly; but I'm after technique now, technique and nothing else. Mr. Stafford advised me to choose a subject I disliked, and to treat it in a brutal manner," she laughed softly. "You see, he knows

that I am afflicted with an excess of sentiment, and he thinks it would be advisable to starve it for a while on some of these dry bones."

"Which skeleton have you chosen?" asked Rus-

sell, smiling.

She pointed it out and the author studied it in silence. While he did so, Ray studied him. Unconsciously, he had assumed something of her first pose, for he held his hat behind him in his clasped hands and his bared head was thrown backward; but the expression of the dark reposeful face was wholly different. As Ray watched him, over her own face flitted a sudden frown. She closed her lips tight, and turning to her canvas, began with swift strokes of her charcoal to sketch in the outlines of her study.

It was owing to Russell's perfect unconsciousness of anything discordant in their relations that he did not withdraw immediately. Instead, he watched her work with interest, marveling at the steady poise of the slight wrist, the certainty of the slender fingers. Minute after minute went by, and Ray became utterly oblivious of his presence—unless the deepening color in her cheek came from another source than simple enthusiasm in her task.

"Pretty good," said a voice behind her suddenly—a voice she knew so well that she never turned her head. "Bien hecho! as one of the guards said to your humble servant a moment ago. When you learn to handle your brush as you do your charcoal,

you'll begin to arrive, Miss Ray."

"Just wait, Peter, till I get out of this dungeon of dead men's bones!" she retorted, with a laugh.

"It seems to me," remarked Russell, with whom Peter had already had some previous chat, "that Mr. Stafford prescribes a severer regimen for you two than he does for his wife." (The lady in question was very busy, in another room, decorating a series of small canvases with an adaptation of the cherubs in one of Murillo's large Conceptions.)

No one answered. Peter thrust his hands a little deeper in his pockets and Ray's charcoal moved more swiftly. At last the boy seemed to feel that a reply of some kind devolved upon him. "You see," he began with an embarrassed laugh, "Mrs. Stafford isn't studying technique, she—she's painting for the

market."

Russell had already surmised as much. He was a man of too wide a culture, too intimate an acquaint-ance with European picture galleries, not to recognize at a glance the difference between the serious student of art and the commercial picture-maker. But he felt some curiosity to know why a man like Mr. Stafford should permit his wife to spend her time at such puerilities. "Indeed?" he said, "I hardly thought she had chosen the best models for a beginner."

Ray put in with a smile: "As that bright little Frenchwoman in the next room would say, 'Ce sont des bêtises!' Did you notice her at all?" she queried, with an effort to turn the conversation. Her motive,

however, was lost upon Peter.

"Murillo's all right," he sturdily maintained, "and his cherubim and seraphim hit the public in a soft spot.—But it's the niggling way Mrs. Stafford copies them."

"Peter!"

"I'm not saying anything people can't see for themselves," he cried, flushing a warm red. "You see," he added, turning to Russell and speaking rapidly, "the trouble is that Stafford's stuff don't sell. He's really rather fine, you know; but he hasn't made himself the fashion. When he was in New York he had a small class, and that helped some—we studied with him afternoons, Miss Ray and I. But it's Mrs. Stafford who supports the family. She's an awfully nice woman, and plucky as the devil; but she will turn out these gaudy little slicked-up pictures—nice and smooth, you know, the way lots of people like 'em!—and it makes Stafford just perfectly sick."

Ray laid aside her charcoal. "Peter thinks she could do better work if she tried—more artistic work, you know; but I disagree with him. And the circumstances are such that she—she ought to be exempted from criticism. Of course it's a pity.

. She is under a sort of contract to paint for some dealer at the rate of three canvases a week—pot boilers," and Ray lowered her voice regretfully. In the creed of the art student, to abandon one-self entirely to the manufacture of the pot boiler is to fall forever from grace; for while the ultimate intention of all painters may be to sell, there are many ways of selling. And young, hopeful, enthusiastic

beginners—like Peter, who dream of gold medals and a place on the walls of the Luxembourg, have usually but little indulgence for the wearied, disheartened workers who have accepted their limitations and abandoned ideals for bread and butter. Ray's intuitions carried her somewhat farther beneath the surface. She regarded the two men with a slightly dubious expression and continued hesitatingly: "But after all, she isn't sacrificing any higher standard when she paints these—chromos. She can't help herself. The truth is, Mrs. Stafford sees everything that way; it's—it's her point of view."

"Y-es," said Russell, slowly smiling, "perhaps so." And indeed, Mrs. Stafford's work seemed a very natural expression of the woman's mind,—she was so crudely matter of fact, so platitudinous and yet so perpetually cheerful. "But Miss Woodward, I wonder if we quite realize the whole of her point of view!" He thoughtfully studied the face of the young girl as he spoke, wondering if she saw all the pathos of the other woman's story. Was the cheery little breadwinner so lacking in perception that she failed to understand her husband's attitude toward her work? He doubted it. And only a great love could give her the strength and courage for her task: in this world it is not always the wisest and most gifted who love best. Did this girl comprehend? "Don't think me a philistine," he exclaimed, "if I say that Art is not everything- even if you spell it with a capital A."

"Take care!" laughed Peter, sauntering off, "Miss Ray spells everything she believes in with a capital letter."

Ray flushed faintly and took up her charcoal again, but Russell followed her across to her easel.

"I'm not exactly an unbeliever," he declared half laughing, half in earnest. "Only it seems to me that those who use the capital A are too much inclined to set the worship of Art before everything else."

He paused, but she made no answer except to lift her eyes gravely to meet his. Behind her was the row of sombre saints—a background of gaunt faces sunk in bituminous gloom; her own small head appeared, in contrast, like a delicate painting by Greuze. Suddenly, Russell forgot Mrs. Stafford, forgot everything but the girl before him. Ray—" it was the first time he had ever used the more familiar little name, "a man who has seen as much of the world as I have, and of life in foreign cities, comes across so many young lives sacrificed on the altar of this merciless deity. For Art's sake they must endure so much, surrender so much! And what does she usually give in return for all the privations, the dangers—" he broke off quickly, for the gray eyes were wide and weary.

"Of course," she said, "there's a long procession of us, and she stands at the goal with a wreath of laurel in her hands. Perhaps one in every hundred of us gets a leaf, and the rest fall by the wayside!

But that's life, you know."

"I wonder if you would spell that word with a capital letter."

"What word?" she asked.

"Life," he answered.

"N-no," said Ray; then suddenly: "Yes, I believe I would—not only Life Temporal but Life Eternal!" The charcoal dropped from her fingers and rolled away over the floor. "Mr. Russell, I think I understand what you mean; but I regard my life as a term of service, not to Art alone. If this is my talent and I can do anything with it, it is my duty to go on. But if I find myself physically unequal to the strain —for it is a strain, on every nerve and every muscle, as only those who have stood at an easel for six or seven or eight hours a day can understand-or if I find that I can never rise above the level of mediocrity, I shall not spend the rest of my life in a hand to mouth existence in foreign cities, playing at bohemianism and spoiling good paint and canvas; I shall go home and get something really useful to do—at least I could teach little children their A B C's!" She paused a moment and caught her breath. "But I hope—I sincerely hope I have it in me to do something worth while in my profession. I am young and strong and not afraid of work; and as far as the —the dangers are concerned, I'm not afraid of those either. I don't know as much as you do of the art life in foreign cities—in New York, a girl student can be very safe and sheltered; but I have joined the great army of the unchaperoned"—a pathetic smile stole round her lips-"in the firm belief that, anywhere and everywhere, the art student can-and very often does-lead as simple, healthy, pure and earnest a life as the workers in any other profession.

I don't know that I—that any girl would be justified in trying the experiment so far from home without a certain fixed income to depend upon—it may be a microscopic one if only she knows how to keep within it; for the problem of how to exist must of course be solved before everything else. But with that eliminated, I can't see much difference between life in one city and in another; the world is very much the same all over, and though there must be a certain percentage of evil, I believe that the good preponderates everywhere,—don't you?"

"A beautiful optimism," was the evasive comment of the man beside her, as he stooped for the fallen charcoal and restored it to her hands; but when he parted from her, he took away with him a memory of the pure young face with that last look of happy confidence shining through its tender freshness. He was strangely stirred by it, and throughout the day it abode with him, while a few fragmentary, half-

remembered lines rose continually to his lips:

"She has a hidden strength,
Which, if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own
. . .

And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen, May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,

Be it not done in pride or in presumption."

CHAPTER X

In the years of our adolescence, when we play the game of "make believe," our elders laugh indulgently at the quaint fabric of our infant imaginations; but when children of a larger growth divert themselves in a similar manner, the world calls it self-delusion, and looks on with a smile of pity. And the reason is, that the earlier play is invested with a prophetic significance by the fond spectators. Let the child hitch his wagon to a star, they say, and who knows where he may arrive in the years to come! But when gray hairs "pretend," it is a pathetic revelation of broken hopes and unfulfilled desires, and the truly pitiful go softly by lest they waken the dreamer prematurely to a realization of the barren present. But that awakening will come, nevertheless, and oh! the bitterness of it. It is far better, no doubt, to walk one's autumnal path with eyes opened wide to see every withering bloom, every falling leaf; for thus, there can be no horrid shock when the first cold blast sweeps the desolate horizon.

Dolores sat in her favorite chair in the rear hall, behind the yellow portières, waiting for her adopted daughter to come home. This hall, or passage-way, was about ten feet in width; it began at the door of Ray's chamber and ran, at right angles with the dining room, along one side of the inner court—on

which two cheerful windows opened; then, turning suddenly, it narrowed to about three feet and stopped abruptly at the kitchen door. The floor was of white tiles-like nine-tenths of the floors in Madrid-and along its entire length was laid a strip of dark brown drugget. Against the wall, on one side, were neat shelves that held the señora's china and glass, and beneath them on a low table rested two quaint earthen water jars-indispensable articles in every Spanish household. Beyond the shelves stood an old black walnut chest of drawers, in which Dolores stored away many of her most precious possessions, and a large wicker cage filled with her feathered pets hung in each of the two small windows. Before one of these stood always the señora's mending basket and her favorite arm chair in what might be called a strategic position, commanding all the windows on the inner court—those of the kitchen on the left and the dining room on the right, while directly opposite through the one window of the front hall could be dimly seen the barred and grated door that gave admission to the little flat.

The señora's attention, this afternoon, was divided between that outer door and the work in her mending basket. Beside her, on a chair, was a pile of fresh and dainty linen which, having already passed under her careful scrutiny, had every button in place, every frill pinched and fluted by loving fingers. Her left hand, now, was thrust into the foot of a small black stocking, and her busy needle wove a net of marvelously fine stitches over an almost invisible hole. This done, it was folded neatly and added to the heap at her side; then, with a sigh of content, she

waited for the tinkle of the doorbell in the hall.

It came at last, and Dolores leaned forward breathlessly to hear a fresh young voice exclaim:

"Buenas tardes, Benita. Donde está mi madre?"

"Oiga á la señorita! Donde está mi madre?" mimicked the maid in mirthful derision; then light footsteps tripped through the dining room, the yellow portières were quickly pushed aside and Benita's plump red finger pointed to the expectant figure in the big armchair.

"There is your mother, señorita—see?"

"Hija mia!" cried Dolores, with a ring of tender gladness in her tones, and Ray was gathered in a

jubilant embrace.

This little scene was enacted nearly every afternoon, and to Ray it was only a pretty comedy that both amused and touched her. She knew Dolores liked it, and it pleased her to give pleasure. In fact, her whole nature overflowed with warm good will and graciousness to all the world; she resembled Ferrara's gentle Duchess in that

"she liked whate'er She looked on, and her looks went everwhere."

And, on the whole, the world had smiled back at her in much the same kindly spirit; for happy-hearted youth—like the first sweet airs of spring—is almost irresistible. But beneath all her impulsiveness were depths that had never been sounded, depths of which the girl herself was dimly cognizant and rather fearful.

This afternoon Dolores had news to communicate. First, she informed Ray that an American señora

had called an hour earlier—a señora of great wealth who remained in her carriage outside while the cour-

ier mounted the long stairway with her card.

"Mrs. Dering," said Ray with a smile, as she threw aside the bit of pasteboard. "Peter shall have the pleasure of returning that call with us! It's an ill wind that makes nobody glad.—Bien está, madre,—

what else have you to tell me?"

"The friend of Señor Staffore, who took almuerzo with us on Tuesday, has engaged board here; he arrives with his boxes tomorrow. I shall give him the room next to yours, hija mia; and he will send up a large writing table of his own—full of little holes for papers which Benita is never to dust! He is a maker of books, this caballero, and all the mornings he will work quietly and comfortably when no one is in the house. It will be very convenient for him . . . and the Blessed Mother knows well that those children of Pablo's have healthy appetites!"

Ray turned away without speaking and pushed open her own door. The señora followed her and studied the girl's face while she threw off her hat and cloak. Something in its unwonted gravity arrested the fluent stream of talk.

"Does it displease you, my life,—the coming of this Señor Rosail? If so, he shall be sent about his business, flying!" and she clapped her hands with a gesture that would have struck Michito's soul with terror.

The gray eyes were lifted frankly. "I'm . . . not glad, señora; but the reason seems entirely too trivial to explain. He is my countryman and—muy

caballeroso! You are fortunate in securing another inmate," and she nodded reassuringly. She had heard all about Pablo's misfortune and the señora's need of money, and felt that it would be selfish to

interpose objections now.

Already, however, the dormant mother-wisdom in Dolores was aroused; she came closer and laid a gentle hand on the girl's shoulder. "Hija, if there is any reason why this caballero should not come, tell your mother. Is he perchance, a lover of my daughter?—a lover whose suit is unwelcome and whose advances you wish to check?"

With a quick blush and a gesture of indignant protest, Ray exclaimed: "My dear señora! American girls don't regard every man of their acquaintance as a possible suitor, and American gentlemen don't persecute young ladies with unwelcome attentions. Mr. Russell has no more idea of making love

to me than—than Don Francisco has!"

A dubious smile flitted round the señora's lips; she took the girl's face between her hands and tilted it upward. "So?" she said, "that would be not at all, truly! as Francisco is already betrothed to his cousin Marica—and he is a constant youth, Francisco! But this Señor Rosail, I like his looks; he is a fine gentleman, 'hombre de buena capa'—as we say in Spain. And his manner pleases me also; it is gentle and considerate, yet without patronage. Only those who are born noble possess a graciousness that is free from condescension; he must be hidalgo in his own country, is it not so?"

Ray shrugged her shoulders with a merry laugh, and pushing Dolores into a chair delivered a lecture

on the subtle caste distinctions that exist in a country where all men are supposed to be born free and equal. The señora listened with intelligent interest, put several pertinent questions and privately arrived at the conclusion that, whether or no Russell was a grandee of the first water, the young art student—by virtue of her descent from various Excellencies—was hidalga to the backbone; and, had it not been for some devastating war that emptied the ancestral coffers, she would have inherited a noble fortune and

been lapped in luxury all her days!

"Oh! la guerra, la guerra!" sighed Dolores, "I know what a terrible thing it is-how it blights a whole country, how it strikes down young men in the prime of their youth or sends them home broken in health, without strength or courage to take up life's labors. Yes, war is a terrible, terrible thing! Have I not seen it also? Oh, España mia! España mia!" She sighed heavily and hopelessly, and Ray, who was curled up on the floor in her favorite attitude, slipped a sympathetic hand between the work roughened fingers. A silence crept over them, and the spell of the winter twilight kept them hushed. Soon, the room was all in darkness except for the ghostly glimmer of the large French window on the balcony. Outside, in the street below, a strolling musician was thrumming a sweet toned guitar, and above the plaintive melody rose at intervals the shrill voice of a little news girl crying the evening papers: "El Liberal y El Pais! . . . El Liberal y El Pa-i-s!"

"Come," cried Dolores suddenly, "sad thoughts are ill company. Let us shut out the darkness and call for lights. I hear Don Francisco's voice in the passage—Benita will be laughing and joking with him and letting the dinner spoil!"

Ray caught her arm as she would have risen. "Not yet, señora. He has gone out again—I heard the hall door close. Poor Don Francisco! you are always scolding him."

"It does him no harm," said the older woman calmly. "He is a good youth, but he talks too much. Marriage will teach him to hold his tongue!"

"You say he is betrothed to his cousin?"

"Si, señorita," replied Dolores, who thought the best way to avoid complications was to have the ineligibility of the sentimental lieutenant understood at once. "It will be a good match for them both," —and she explained at some length that the young man's grandfather had owned a fine olive plantation on the banks of the Guadalquiver, and his two daughters dying before him, he had left it in trust to his sons-in-law, the fathers of Marica and Francisco. They had worked in partnership ever since and made money; but now Marica was coming of age, and in case of her marriage with anyone else the property would have to be sold and the money divided. The pay of a lieutenant amounted to very little, and Francisco would be doing a wise thing if he married his cousin and kept the land together.

"Hm!" said Ray, thinking of another twilight tale—about two young people who had begun life

with nothing but their love to bank upon. "You were not so worldly wise, señora."

"Ah!" cried the faithful widow, "but there are

not many men like my José!"

There was a moment's pause, and then Ray sat up with a laugh and said: "Madre, when you were a girl did you ever have the caballeros on the street to make remarks as you passed by?"

"Many a time," said Dolores calmly.

"And did you ever have one to pluck the flower from his buttonhole and drop it at your feet?"

"I have had that too," declared the old Spanish-

woman. "But why does my daughter ask?"

"Oh! because. And what did you do, señora? Did you try not to see and hear, or did you ever forget and smile—just because it took you by surprise and you hadn't time to think of what was

proper?"

Dolores laughed softly and caught the girl in her arms. "What I did, hija mia, was not always the wisest thing. It is quite natural that the young caballeros should make their compliments to you," she added with maternal pride, "but of course it is best for you not to notice or to hear. You should cast down your eyes and walk along as though you were going to mass and did not know there was a caballero within sight. But what have they said to you, light of my eyes?"

"At first," confessed the girl, "I didn't dream they were speaking to me when I heard remarks in the gallery and on the street; but lately they have been unmistakable. I am usually very discreet,

señora, but this afternoon I happened to come home all alone, and as I passed through the Puerta del Sol —you know there are always numbers of young men standing on the corner—well, as I passed, there was quite a group of them, and I couldn't help thinking how picturesque they were in their soft felt sombreros with the graceful capas draping their shoulders. Among them I noticed Don Francisco's uniform, and when I approached he recognized me. His cap came off instantly, and he bowed—a most beautiful bow in the fashion of at least a hundred years ago! At the same moment all the sombreros came off, too, and the capas undraped themselves as their owners made obeisance. Of course that was only proper; in America I would have expected the same courtesy in only a less pronounced degree. But I didn't expect a chorus of ejaculations; and when one very fine gentleman, whose cloak was of black broadcloth bordered with crimson velvet, dropped his boutonnière directly in my path, it—it was a little disconcerting. My conscience convicts me of a smile, señora—I couldn't help it!"

"Ya lo creo!" commented Dolores. "And what

was it they said?"

"He of the bouquet said nothing at all; but the others with one accord exclaimed: 'Ah-h! la señorita simpatica!" Her demure mimicry broke suddenly at the end in little grace notes of laughter.

"Well," said Dolores, "that was very refined. It wouldn't have been in such good taste if they had said hermosa or bonita, but simpatica—that was very

refined."

"But what does it mean, señora? The dictionary gives sympathetic, and I'm sure that's very inappropriate."

"I know nothing of your English, but simpatica—ah! that is a great word and means many things—una señorita con mucho sentimiento, a señorita who is all heart and who appeals to one's very soul!"

A ripple of derision was the only comment; and Benita, coming in with a lighted lamp, paused on the threshold to survey the picture—Dolores leaning forward in her chair with her hands clasped and her eyes raised fervently to heaven, and Ray on the floor rocking herself back and forth in an ecstacy of mirth.

"You may laugh," said the old Spanishwoman, "but it is the truth I am telling you. When a caballero sees a charming señorita on the street, and he feels that she is simpatica to him, he follows her home and asks at the porteria if she is married. If so, he goes away in despair! but if she is neither wed nor betrothed he may make love to her—when the duenna is looking the other way! . . .

"Ah! I remember—long years ago, when José and I were first married and living in my dear Seville—how one day I was coming home from market with my basket on my arm, and a young caballero, very handsome and richly dressed, spoke to me and followed me on the street. And I—ah! well, I was young and full of fun, and I did not let him guess that I was married! So he carried my basket for me, though it was not seemly for a fine gentleman like him to be carrying a market basket full of vegetables. On the doorstep I was just about to

take it from him, saying, 'Mil gracias, señor!' when—the door opened and there was José! Oh, how he scowled at the señor, and how vexed was the señor that he had carried the vegetables! Away he went, in a fine temper—and my husband scolded me. But I—I only laughed and said: 'See now, José, what is there to make you angry? It was very amiable of the señor to help me bring home your dinner.'"

"You must have been a beauty!" cried the American girl, in an outburst of admiration; for the señora's black eyes were sparkling in the rays of Benita's lamp, and despite the silver gleaming of her hair the spell of her memories had made her young

again.

"Beautiful? no, no, children—I was never that; but José, he was satisfied," and she smiled in wifely triumph. Suddenly, she laid a finger on her lips with an air of mystery, searched her capacious pocket for a bunch of keys, started up, unlocked a little cupboard in the wall and drew forth a guitar. "Sst! Benita, close the door—I wouldn't have Don Antonio or Francisco to hear me for all the world! They would think it very unseemly for a widow of my age to be singing and playing a guitar." She tuned the instrument rapidly as she spoke, testing the strings with a swift ringing touch, and resuming her seat, nodded brightly to Ray. "This is one of the songs that José used to sing beneath my window in Seville, when I was a muchachita such as you!"

Then, in a voice of rich quality, with no hint of age in its round resonance, she began one of the unique melodies of Andalusia, full of countless turns

and quavers, suggestive of clicking castanets, of swaying figures and the soft frou-frou of silken skirts.

"Para niñas de gracia,
las de Sevilla,
que prenden corazones
en la mantilla;
que prenden corazo-o-o-o-nes
con alfileres,
en la mantilla—
en la manti-i-i-i-lla!"

The last note had scarcely died into silence when a volley of hand-clappings sounded outside in the hall, where Peter and the Staffords were listening delightedly. But Dolores, instead of granting them an encore, fled away to the kitchen, whither they all pursued her, till she threatened them from the door with a great soup spoon, vowing that they ought to take shame to themselves for making sport of an old woman—and a widow at that!

CHAPTER XI

In speaking of his sister Isabel, Hal Thornton had observed that "the attraction of a pretty woman was liable to become coercive where her relatives were concerned;" and Russell, in spite of his former disapproval of the sentiment, was forced now to admit its truth. For Mrs. Dering, who had received and welcomed him as her brother's proxy, showed a disposition to accept his attendance as a matter of course. He was stopping at the same hotel, and it was but natural that he should take his meals at the same table with his friend's aunt and sister; natural, too, that he should question them concerning their plans for each day's entertainment and-being the chivalrous gentleman he was-put himself at their disposal for all services that their courier was unable to perform. In fact, as Mrs. Dering's antipathy to that useful but extortionate individual increased, Russell became their constant escort; and this, together with the demands made upon his time by the small circle of acquaintances that he had formed during his previous stay, left him not a moment to devote to the work which should have been his primary object.

A week spent in this manner convinced him that a change of residence would be advisable, but it was Mr. Stafford who first suggested that he would have in the señora's home the needed quiet and freedom

from interruption. The idea found favor with him at once-for various reasons: first, he told himself that among this party of artists, who took their own work seriously, he would receive more consideration than he could ever expect among idlers and pleasure seekers; then, too, Peter's revelation in the gallery had awakened his sympathies for the disheartened painter and his brave little helpmeet. To the author, Mrs. Stafford's story appealed as one of life's unrecognized tragedies; and it had occurred to him that he might lighten her labors, give an impetus to her husband's fortunes and help himself at the same time. For he had, besides the book on which he was engaged, a nearly completed series of articles on Spanish festivals, that had been ordered by one of the leading American monthlies, and for the illustration of which he had been given almost unlimited It occurred to him that Mr. Stafford could be intrusted with much of this, and when the proposition was made to the artist he received it with grateful willingness.

It was arranged between them, that besides making a number of studies in Madrid, the painter should avail himself of the Holy Week excursions to Seville and obtain sketches of the religious processions and more picturesque types and costumes of southern Spain. And Russell felt that this opportunity of personally supervising the illustration of his writings was singularly fortunate, for—like most authors—he had suffered not a little from misinterpretations of his text. Under the circumstances, there was nothing remarkable, or discourteous to

Mrs. Dering, in his removal from the hotel to join the American colony in the Calle Mayor; so it was expeditiously accomplished on the Saturday of that same week.

If any other motive underlay his more obvious reasons, none but Russell himself could be actually aware of it.

The morning after his arrival, it being Sunday, the señora's coffee pot made frequent trips to the kitchen to be warmed over for the tardy comers. Ray was last of all; she came in rosy from her long sleep and exclaimed to find the others still seated at the table.

"We waited for your majesty, of course," declared Peter mischievously, rising with exaggerated deference to place her chair in position. "Could a South Carolinian have done better than that, Reina mia?" he whispered, as she took her seat. To which, having no adequate retort, she feigned a sudden deafness.

"This, you know, is the first day of the Carnival," said Mr. Stafford, "but Don Antonio has just been telling us that it will hardly amount to much, owing to the depressing circumstances in which Spain now finds herself. Still, anything will serve as an excuse for a bull fight; and although, during the winter season, none of the distinguished toreros are in Madrid, today's fight will probably be better than any that will take place during the next month, at least. The 'corrida de toros' is the great national spectacle which no visitor to Spain can afford to neglect; it will doubtless be an important feature in

the articles that I am to have the pleasure of illustrating for Mr. Russell, so I don't wish to lose this opportunity of making some preliminary studies. Peter accompanies me, and we are waiting to know if you and Mrs. Stafford care to join us."

Ray flushed crimson and hesitated. "I have made up my mind," she slowly avowed, "that I will see one bull fight before I leave Madrid, provided that—that

I don't have to go on Sunday."

"You need not," said Russell quickly. "There will be saints' days enough in the next few months to give you several opportunities— not to mention Easter Monday, which is always the occasion for one of the greatest fights of the year."

"I don't know that I'll go at all," said Mrs. Stafford with a shudder. "Certainly not today. I've had a tiring week and need absolute rest." With that, she excused herself to Ray and left the room.

"Well," announced Peter, "Mr. Stafford and I will take in the show by ourselves—unless Mr. Rus-

sell will change his mind."

"No, I think not," said the author. "Professional motives will drive me to the arena later in the season, when Mazzantini and Reverte and other famous espadas are to be seen; but I don't care to witness any less artistic butchery." Then he added, smiling at Miss Woodward, "I must confess, too, to an inherited awe of the Tythingman."

"Well, bye-bye!" cried Peter, departing in Mr. Stafford's wake; but as he reached the door he looked back with a merry grin, saying: "This, you

know, is literally a case of the ox in the pit!"

The girl laughed and shook her head, and when they were alone she turned impulsively to the Bostonian. "Thank you for keeping me in countenance. I'll be doing violence to my conscience if I go at all, —it must be a revolting sight! And I simply couldn't go on Sunday; we artists make little enough of the day as it is. I wasn't brought up to spend the whole of it in sight-seeing and amusement, and it makes me feel like a heathen. I've been thinking seriously of asking the señora to let me go to mass with her this morning."

"A still better plan," suggested Russell, "would be to go with me to the chapel of the British Legation, where there is an English service every Sunday at eleven o'clock. It is very near the Plaza San Domingo, not more than twenty minutes' walk from

here."

"The British Legation? Good for old England! wherever the Union Jack hangs out, you may count on finding a Book of Common Prayer somewhere in its shadow. I am very glad to hear it. Henceforth, I shall gratefully join in the prayers for Her Majesty the Queen, the Prince of Wales and all the

Royal Family!"

She had slipped away while speaking, and it was not until the yellow portières had fallen behind her that Russell asked himself whether his invitation had been accepted. He decided that it had, and at twenty minutes of eleven he came out again into the dining room to meet her. As there were no signs of her appearance he sat down at the empty table with his newspaper. A quarter of an hour went by.

Then the paper was thrown aside and he paced the room for five minutes more. Finally, he called Benita and requested her to knock at Miss Woodward's door and inquire when she would be ready.

Benita laughed. "The señorita went out nearly

twenty minutes ago," she said.

"Impossible!" declared Russell, "for I was sitting here, and she couldn't have passed through without my knowledge."

Benita lifted the yellow portières and pointed to the rear passage. "She went along that to the kitchen, señor, and then out into the front hall, and I opened the door for her *very* softly, thus—"

There was a twinkle in the little maid's eye, and her expressive pantomine was, to say the least of it, a trifle irritating. Russell questioned no further, but went quietly into his own room and shut the door.

"There be three things," said Agur the son of Jakeh, "which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon the rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." We marvel greatly that to these four he added not a fifth, for, since the days of our mother Eve, woman-nature has changed little, and the way of a maid with a man can never be forecast with anything like certainty. One general proposition, however, we would present for masculine consideration: at this critical stage of acquaintanceship, the

woman's actions are usually directly opposed to her inclinations, hence, it is the unexpected which happens.

Our heroine had arrived at the point when she must either follow the course she had laid down and suppress, with a strong hand, any attempt to bring about a greater intimacy, or she must lower her flag and admit to herself her own willingness for a traitorous peace. Somehow, as she privately debated the question that Sunday morning, her grievance against the author dwindled into petty insignificance. From a transatlantic standpoint it was very hard to discern sectional lines; they seemed to be merged in the vast perspective, and her mind's eye had begun to perceive only the magnitude and the unity of the great country that was hers. But it was some time before she realized this; and now a sudden fear, that her disloyal weakening toward the author was due to a growing preference for his society, filled her with hot confusion. All healthy natures are quick to throw off the first attacks of the little germ of love—but the more vigorously it is rejected in the beginning, the greater the ultimate danger!

"I couldn't go with him!" Ray told herself with nervous vehemence, as she opened her guide book and carefully studied a map of the city's streets. "What would Louise think of me? I couldn't!"

Her conscience troubled her, however, as Benita noiselessly unlocked the outer door, and a vague impression of Russell's profile, bending over his newspaper, haunted her as she descended the long stairway. She tried to persuade herself that his

remark could hardly be construed into a definite invitation; he had said only that "it would be a better plan." If he had really intended to offer his escort, he had made a mistake in employing the conditional mood; for one could neither accept nor refuse an invitation couched in those terms. Still, she hoped he would not think her rude. If he had any idea of waiting for her he would probably be late for service. He was evidently going himself, and she liked that in him,—at least, she would have liked it in any one else!

Out in the street the atmosphere was mild and windless. As she passed through the Puerta del Sol she observed that the great square was comparatively deserted; the usual throng of street venders were absent, so were the idlers on the corner; there was quite a Sabbath calm over all. The buildings, in their light tones of cream or gray or palest red, where the golden sunlight had touched them into stronger relief, stood out in sharp contrast with the deep blue sky, or, veiled in violet shadows, melted away into its azure depths. Ray turned into the Calle de Preciados, and, keeping the sunny pavement, walked rapidly, with now and then a nervous glance behind. She reached the Plaza San Domingo without difficulty, and had just halted there in some perplexity as to what her next step should be, when just a little in advance of her she saw two ladies in quiet street costume with their hair dressed in unmistakably English fashion. She followed them closely, and presently came to a large, massive building with gloomy portals that opened directly on the street. Her unconscious guides entered and led the way, through a dark passage on the ground floor, to a small door outside of which hung a placard announcing the hours for service. After reading this, Ray went in unhesitatingly and found herself in a small, low-ceiled room furnished very simply as a chapel.

Taking her seat in one of the first rows of chairs, she looked around her. There were about fifteen or twenty persons present, all utter strangers. With a rising lump in her throat, she found the places in her own little prayer book, and winked hard for a few minutes as a wave of homesickness overflowed her spirit. At last, the white surpliced figure in the tiny chancel rose and came forward, saying:

"The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth

keep silence before Him."

As she heard these words, it seemed to Ray that the proportions of the narrow room were changed. She shut her eves—and saw the familiar white walls and arched ceiling, the old-fashioned carved pulpit with its mahogany sounding board and narrow stair, and the rows of mural tablets that she had studied through all the Sundays of her childhood. In fancy, she heard the sweet old chimes of St. Michael's bells and the organ's mellow undertone; and she saw again, in one corner of the square, high pew, her grandmother's delicate old face, tenderly framed in the soft ruching of her widow's bonnet. At the other end of the pew was her father's military figure—arms folded and gray head erect, and

close at her side was Louise, whose round, childish face bent with hers over the same little prayer book.

In a dream, she followed the whole service; and when it was over, and she had come out again into the street, she walked on for some minutes quite oblivious to the course she was taking. Then, with a start of surprise, she woke to the fact that she was in an unfamiliar neighborhood. She tried to remember whether she had turned to the right or left in leaving the Plaza San Domingo, and failing in this, took wise note of the sun's position and hurried on in what she believed to be the direction of the Puerta del Sol. . .

In a city where beggars, unrebuked, sun themselves by palace walls, and ragged groups of lighthearted and light-fingered golfos cease squabbling over dropped coins-or more illegitimate pickings -to stare impudently at a royal cavalcade, the Carnival has of necessity many aspects. While the wealthier classes indulge in a masquerade more or less innocent at ball room and theatre, the festival on the street is given up to the people—to shop girls and serving maids, tradesmen and lackeys. At certain hours and in certain quarters of the city, gay caballeros, also, sally forth in fantastic or grotesque disguise; but the señora or señorita takes no active part in the out door revels. To appear masked upon a public thoroughfare would be to expose herself to the rough jests of the good humored but riotous mob that pervades the streets from Sunday noon till Tuesday night. However, during the early hours of the Carnival, when the air is aglitter with paper confetti, she may drive undisguised in her landau through the Paseo de Recoletos (which is to Madrid what the Row is to London), for there she will encounter only the mascarones of her own social class: of these, the greater number prefer the disguise of a bebe-a monster doll, with huge simpering pasteboard head, beruffled cap and short, full dress of pink, blue, pale green or lavender, beneath which are black stockinged legs and lace trimmed petticoats very much in evidence; and every now and then one of them will spring up behind her carriage, if it be filled with pretty faces, and scatter therein unstinted compliments and handfuls of confetti, while paper serpentinos aimed deftly by other admiring hands will fly over her head, uncoiling in a gay parabola. But through the successive strata of social life, Carnival customs descend by swift stages from light badinage to coarse jesting, from graceful play to rowdyism and riot-just as the bright confetti that are first showered over a Paris bonnet are afterward scooped from the gutter and scattered again and again by the dirty little hands of the golfo.

This year, despite Don Antonio's prediction to the contrary, there were great numbers of gay, unthinking spirits whose ardor was undampened by the national anxieties. The fiddling Neros are not all of Rome; indeed, it is everywhere remarkable how little either public or private calamities depress those who have met with no personal loss.

By twelve o'clock that Sunday morning, the Sabbath calm no longer reigned in any of the principal avenues or squares. In the poorer quarters of the city, clowns and punchinellos in tarnished motley, long tailed devils in the cast off garments of last year's demoniac crew, and numberless grotesque figures that had simply changed their sex and added a pasteboard head of villainous appearance, struggled and shouted together in uncouth glee.

But the wide avenue of the Prado was alive with masqueraders of another sort, and by the white fountain of Cybele a stream of handsome equipages

flowed into the Recoletos.

The American girl had so far mistaken her proper course that she was rapidly approaching this scene of revelry. Her attention had already been attracted, even in the quiet streets through which she was passing, by occasional mascarones hurrying to some rendezvous, and as she went on, the absence of familiar landmarks caused her some uneasiness: but she saw no one whom she cared to address, and there was no possibility of her becoming lost, for the first street car she met would convey her to the Puerta del Sol where all the lines of the city converge. With this assurance she was just comforting herself when she heard, behind her, rapid steps and a voice crying:

"Whither goes La Reina Americana?"

At the sound of the familiar sobriquet, which Don Francisco used on all occasions, Ray turned hastily. A slight, graceful youth was bending in obeisance so profound that the velvet cap in his hand approached the pointed toe of his leather buskin. He was attired in what was intended for the garb of a

troubadour, with long hose and belted tunic; a gay mantle covered his shoulders and screened the lower part of his face, while a small black mask and a wig of flowing hair completed the disguise. It was the dress adopted by all the members of a club of amateur musicians to which belonged some of the wildest spirits among the gilded youth of Madrid. But Ray thought she recognized the bow, and the voice and figure seemed familiar, so without a moment's hesitation she exclaimed:

"Don Francisco!"

"If I disown that name I am no less a slave of the Queen of Hearts."

"It must be Don Francisco," she insisted. how would you have known me?"

"He would be a blind man who failed to recognize a ray of sun," replied the mask, with another graceful salute.

"Ah! it is you," exclaimed the girl, with a sigh of relief; there was no mistaking Francisco's stereotyped compliments. "Please tell me how to reach the Puerta del Sol—I've missed my way."
"All ways are the queen's," he answered,

"although the peon* may only move forward."

"But the knight's move, caballero, would lead me to the square I wish to reach," declared Ray laughingly. She felt perfect confidence in this young Spaniard, for she had often heard Dolores say that

^{*}A play on the word, which means either slave, or pawnin chess.

Francisco was a good youth, and in all her intercourse with him he had shown her nothing but respectful admiration.

At her ready sally the troubadour bowed once again, and his dark eyes sparkled behind the little slits in his black mask. "Will the queen follow me?" he asked.

"Only so far as she may, and it is to her interest to do so," the girl retaliated. And, when he bowed once more and led her onward down the narrow, sunny street, she added, mischievously: "She may outstrip you; or, if the distance is great, would she not gain by the exchange if she abandoned her knight and took a—street car?"

The mask sighed deeply. "You would play a cruel game, Reina mia. I fear now that I may find a rival on that square."

"You have no right to have any fears or hopes in the matter," admonished the little American, half seriously. "Dolores has told me where your allegiance is due."

"Then Dolores, whoever she may be, has misled you. I am a free lance, señorita, and can offer my allegiance where I will."

"Whoever she may be!" echoed Ray, in sudden alarm. "Who are you, that you do not know Dolores?"

Her companion, perceiving that he had made a slip, sought to retrieve it. "Certainly I know Dolores. What is more, Reina mia, I know many

of the name—which is common enough; but you, perhaps, know only one. For the moment I had for-

gotten who was in your thoughts."

"But you could not, had you been Don Francisco!" she retorted, her suspicions now thoroughly aroused. "Pray leave me, caballero, I would much prefer to go alone," and she quickened her pace almost to a run.

"I knew I had a rival on that square," returned the mask, easily keeping step with her. "So the pawn's move, you see, was the wisest."

It had brought them to the Prado.

The scene that met Ray's eyes would at any other time have roused her keen enjoyment, so full it was of color, light and movement. The sky burned blue, and vivid noon spread shadowless over the wide avenue. Afar off, between gray, feathery lines of leafless trees, the silvery summits of the snow clad mountains glittered coldly on the horizon. But from overhead it snowed sparkles of color; and serpentinos, like rainbows gone mad, fluttered and whirled, festooning themselves in the bare branches above or writhing under foot in blue and crimson coils.

Ray, however, saw nothing but a prismatic blur. She heard laughter and gay cries, the clatter of hoofs and the whirr of carriage wheels. Before starting on another flight she glanced to right and left in utter dismay, for the pavement was crowded with fantastic forms. At her elbow, the troubadour was imploring in extravagant phrases that she would take his arm for a promenade along the sidewalk.

"One single turn, señorita, and then I swear I will place you in safety on the tramvia that goes straight to the Puerta del Sol. Fear nothing, mi Reina, mi vida! Only walk with me one momentito—"

But Ray was off, the sight of a street car in the distance had lent wings to her feet.

The troubadour gave chase.

"Anda!" cried a gay voice near by. "Run!"

"Stop her!" called the troubadour; and a serpentino flying overhead settled in a gaudy noose about her shoulders, while right in her path an impish mascaron in pink petticoats capered a frantic ballet. She threw up her hands to free herself of the fragile fetter, swerved aside to avoid the bebe's open arms, and darted on with a whole troop of merrymakers in pursuit—one of whom stooped suddenly to pick up a tiny book, bound in worn morocco, that had fallen to the pavement.

Just then a familiar voice exclaimed: "Well, Miss Ray! Is this your idea of a nice, quiet way to

spend the Sabbath?"

"Oh, Peter!" she gasped, seizing him by the arm.

"Take me away—just take me away!"

"I intend to," he responded dryly; and heedless of the impudent sallies of those revellers whom he had baulked of their prey, he forced a passage through the crowd till a comparatively quiet corner had been reached. Pausing there to await the street car, he scrutinized his companion with politely suppressed amusement. Ray's own sense of humor was inwardly making mock of her, and when the dignified statement that she had been to church exploded the last vestige of Peter's gravity, she joined in the laugh and followed it with a full confession.

"So Russell tried to be civil and got snubbed for his pains," commented the boy, regarding her solemnly with his hands thrust deep in his pockets.

She colored high. "Don't —don't put it that way,

Peter."

"Hm! that's the way he'll put it," was the comforting assurance.

CHAPTER XII

That night, at nine o'clock, in the ladies' salon of the Hotel de Paris, Eliot Russell was awaiting Mrs. Dering, to whom he had sent up his card five minutes earlier. As he sank luxuriously into the satin embrace of a capacious armchair, a distinct sense of physical well-being overcame him. The thick piled carpet was soft under his feet, the large windows were warmly curtained with dull hued tapestries. A mellow light, diffused throughout the apartment, was focused most strongly at the further end where sat two persons—an elderly gentleman, half hidden behind a newspaper, and a pale, big-browed girl in spectacles, who was perched awkwardly before an open piano, her long thin fingers wandering over its ivory keys with soft, sympathetic touch.

Mentally contrasting these surroundings with his cramped little room in the señora's flat—the uncompromising straightbacked chairs, the inhospitable brazier with its unwieldy wooden rim encumbering the floor, the ingrain carpet through which might be felt every inequality of the tiles beneath—Russell asked himself, honestly, why he had made the change. For his work's sake he had sought a more restful atmosphere; and yet, within twenty-four hours after his removal from the hotel, he had returned to it as to a haven of refuge. He had imag-

ined himself overtaxed by the attentions due to Mrs. Dering from her brother's friend; yet, only this morning, he had offered to Miss Woodward a small measure of the same courtesy, and her inexplicable rejection of it had caused him more mental disturbance than Mrs. Dering could have brought about in a month. He must be very thinskinned, he thought resentfully. What a frail thing was a man's pride that so slight a prick should touch him on the raw! He almost wished that he could comfort himself with a frank scorn of the girl's ill breeding; but her conduct had been only a polite intimation that she wanted none of his society. And if she had been of this mind from the beginning she must have found him strangely obtuse! His brow burned as he recalled how he had sought her in the gallery. Now, the question was whether or no he should remain with Dolores. An immediate removal would be tantamount to an admission of-of what? He need not be on terms of intimacy with all his fellow boarders; Miss Woodward had simply fixed the limits of their acquaintanceship; henceforward, their intercourse could be confined to the formal courtesies of the table—for, except at meals, they need never meet. After the morning's episode it had suited him to lunch at a café; so he had seen nothing of her until dinner time, when she had appeared rather preoccupied, giving but little heed to Peter's graphic account of the afternoon's performance in the arena and the narrow escape of a picador who had fallen from his horse. Only once, as she was rising from the table,

she had glanced in his direction with a distinctly propitiatory smile, and he wondered if it were possible that—

"Mr. Russell, I have kept you waiting an unconscionable time!" With a soft trailing of silken draperies, Mrs. Dering was beside him, both hands extended.

As the author started to his feet he inly chided himself for having felt so little impatience to see her. In the exquisite completeness of her costume was a subtle compliment to his taste, and even though his masculine perceptions failed to grasp each perfect detail he was agreeably conscious of the whole effect: he felt her to be the supremely beautiful note in the harmony of that well appointed room. Against the silvery grayness of her gown, she wore on her bosom a knot of purple violets, from which a breath of perfume—a mere whispered sweetness—reached him as he resumed his seat. At the other end of the room, the big-browed girl was softly playing Kennst du das Land. Russell began to feel that all his angles —of which throughout the day he had been absurdly, painfully conscious—were disintegrating and melting away.

He recalled a summer vacation in Canada, nearly twelve years past, when a young Harvard graduate and a stripling sophomore—after six weeks of camp life, fishing and tramping—had turned up, sunburned and happy, at Quebec; and there on Dufferin Terrace, one afternoon in the clear August twilight when the stars were stealing out overhead and across the wide St. Lawrence like a chain of threaded

sparks were gleaming the lights of Point Levis, they had unexpectedly encountered Thornton senior, stalwart, grayhaired and gracious, and with him an imperious blond fairy of thirteen. The eager blue eyes of the little Isabel, the insistent ring in the childish voice as she demanded to know everything, to hear everything that they had seen and done, recurred to Russell now as he caught the bright questioning of Mrs. Dering's glance; but instead of answering her half uttered queries in regard to his new abode and fellow inmates, he leaned forward with a sudden smile and put a question in his turn.

Now, when a man and a woman in a strange land chance to be alone together under the soothing influences of shaded lamps and quiet music, and their every speech is prefaced with *Do you remember?* a certain little god pulls off the bandage from his eyes, drops his bow and quiver, and with a silken skein of pleasant memories begins to weave a web about them both. For Cupid is a wanton mischief maker, as whimsical as he is unscrupulous, and man, poor man!—purblind and wrapped in a so tender vanity—is

often his innocent coadjutor.

An hour slipped by, during which the old gentleman, who was stout and somnolent, remained invisible behind his newspaper, and the pale girl bending nearsightedly over the piano lost herself utterly in classic *preludes* and *intermezzos*. But at last the young musician rose abruptly and left the room; the old gentleman awoke with a start and followed her, crumpling his newspaper noisily as he went out; and then fate—that current of unrelated circumstances

which in real life so often wrecks the most artistic plots—swept in, and Cupid's net vanished like a cobweb in the blast.

A burst of unmodulated laughter, a skurry of skirts, and there entered two pretty, loud voiced, over dressed girls, followed by a self conscious youth with very auburn hair. There was some friendly rivalry over the piano stool, which was finally decided in favor of the red-haired youth, who squared himself before the instrument and proceeded to hammer out a noisy two step, in execrable tempo.

Russell moved impatiently in his seat and Mrs. Dering elevated her shoulders gently. "One of the pleasures of hotel life!" she murmured with resignation, and inquired once more how Russell liked his

new quarters.

With nerves on edge, he described Dolores as a Madonna of the frying-pan, Francisco as the personification of gallantry and garlic, Don Antonio as a vest pocket edition of Cervantes—and hated him-

self all the while for doing it.

The performance at the piano soon resolved itself into a duet, to which the red haired youth played the accompaniment while in shrill unison his companions chanted the most inane of the popular songs of the day—one of the kind that has its genesis on the music hall stage and that travels widely and swiftly over the lower planes and inartistic levels of our national taste till the hurdy gurdy man performs its lingering obsequies.

"Who are these people?" asked Russell, rising at

last in desperation.

"Americans, of course," said Mrs. Dering under her breath, "and from the South, I imagine, from their accent. The girls are pretty enough,—but how about your theory?"

This was an unfortunate reference to a remark made a few days previously, just after Russell's conversation with Ray Woodward in the gallery. The author had been talking "shop" to Mrs. Dering, and had admitted, half jestingly, that to him the hour of supreme interest in the evolution of a novel was that in which he first conceived the personality of his heroine. She demanded: Had the psychological moment passed in the present case? It was only dawning, he confessed, a little consciously; extreme youth was one requisite, as he was dealing with a Spaniard—for womanhood blooms early in most southern latitudes. Then he had added: "I sometimes think that the most interesting type of southern woman is to be found in our own country, where there is no less poetry and far more mentality and spirituality than among the women of southern Europe."

To have other people discover a flaw in one of his theories—especially in one that has been the outgrowth of a sentiment—is what no man enjoys. "There are exceptions to everything," declared Russell defensively, and retreated in haste with the shrill

refrain pursuing him down the corridor.

As the outer silence enfolded him, he drew a long breath of content. The great open Puerta del Sol held now a vast pillar of the night darkness, jeweled round its base by rows upon rows of lighted windows. Overhead, immeasurably high, a few stars glimmered-small, keen points of brightness pricking through the vaulted black. From this wide peace he crossed reluctantly into the Calle Mayor, where, late as it was, several masked figures were to be seen among the scattered groups along the sidewalk, and in the air were sounds of laughter with a distant tinkle of guitars. Further down the street he caught sight of a gaily decorated float that had come to a stand directly before the tenement in which Dolores lived. Seated within it were about fifteen young men in troubadour garb; and, as he approached, the tinkling prelude closed with a ringing chord and the men's voices softly rose in a tender love song written to the measure of the pavana. The gliding movement was plainly marked by the low chanting of the basses, through which a tenor voice, singularly pure and clear, threaded the graceful melody.

Russell paused to listen at the nearest corner, and lost himself in a maze of thought. This fantastic bit of serenading chimed in harmoniously with his mood, just as the sympathetic touch of the pale young musician had soothed him on his first arrival at the hotel. The crass performance, which followed that, had seemed like a desecration; but now, for all he knew, something infinitely less innocent might lurk behind the tuneful pleading of these bright plumaged night birds, and yet they in no degree offended his fastidious fancy. Pondering this, he reminded himself of a thought which had recently struck him with some force—that in the Maker of

the universe was vested not only the Supreme Intelligence but the Supreme Taste,—and he groped vaguely for the divine standards by which were tested finally what things in this world were good.

There was a clatter of horses' feet on the stones as the singers drove on down the street; and, at that moment, from the wide open, brightly lighted doorway which Russell himself was about to enter, a slight figure in a crimson mantle darted out and swung himself lightly into a seat among the others on the float.

Just within the doorway was the bent form of the old portero, in a low wooden chair tipped back against the side wall of the long passage, a copy of *El Pais* spread out over his knees, and in his hands, held close against his eyes, a small white paper parcel. He looked up with an air of relief as Russell entered.

"A thousand pardons; but would the señor have the goodness to read me what is written here?"

The American bent over to receive the parcel, turned it to the light and read aloud the superscription: "To the honorable Señorita Woodward—La Reina Americana—on the third piso of this building, by the hands of the portero."

That worthy sighed deeply, and rubbed the stiff joints of his rheumatic knees. "The third piso!" he grumbled. "It is for the pretty young foreigner who lodges with Doña Dolores. But the third piso—oh,

my poor back!"

"Was this brought by the mask in the crimson mantle?" asked Russell quietly.

"Si, señor—by that same honorable caballero," amended the old man in grateful consideration of the pesetas in his pocket; then laziness being his besetting sin, he added insinuatingly: "It is very high up, the third piso—and the señor is doubtless a friend of the señorita; the parcel would therefore be as safe in his hands as in my own."

"You wish me to deliver it?" Russell demanded.

"If the señor would be so kind, and it would not inconvenience him too much! It would have been presumptuous to ask, but as the señor has offered—being a friend of the señorita, and the stairs being so steep—a hundred thousand thanks! May his honor sleep well!" and a torrent of wordy blessings followed the younger man as he lightly mounted the worn wooden steps of the long ascent. But small as the parcel was, it weighed heavily on Russell's thoughts as he fitted his latch key in the señora's door.

The little flat was warm and cheerful; in the dining room, the rays of the large oil lamp fell upon the table in a bright circle and glowed vividly on a dish of golden oranges in the centre of the white cloth. All the chairs, save one, were empty; but Peter, with an open newspaper and a cigarette between his fingers, sat just where Russell had left him a couple of hours earlier. He looked up now with a gesture of welcome.

"Awfully glad to see you! It's really not late, but everyone's deserted me. Francisco was the last he'd be a pleasant fellow enough if one could only

understand half of what he was saying."

The boy's rueful face won a sympathetic smile from the author, who laid the parcel on the table and asked if Miss Woodward had retired.

"I think she has," said Peter, leaning forward to read the address. "Why, how did this come?" he questioned eagerly, and as Russell explained, he took the little bundle in his hand and felt it with inquisitive fingers. "As I live—this must be the missing prayer book. She was awfully cut up this morning when she found she'd lost it—wanted to advertise in the papers. She'll be tremendously glad to get it back."

"How did she happen to lose it?" Russell asked

the question in spite of himself.

Peter chuckled reminiscently. "I don't suppose she'd mind your knowing," he mused. "Have a cigarette? No? Well, I prefer cigars myself but I can't afford to smoke them—No, thank you, I've just lit this and it's my limit for tonight—must consider my nerves, you know. Well, as I was saying, I don't believe she'd mind my telling you," and leaning back in his chair he drew a vivid picture of Ray's escapade that morning. "Of course," he concluded, "it served her perfectly right for going off alone. I scolded her well for not accepting your escort."

At these words his companion flushed painfully; under the brown of his cheeks the blood mounted up into his high white forehead. "Unfortunately," he

said, "my society appears to be distasteful."

"Oh, don't imagine it's yourself," cried Peter, reassuringly. "I fancy she likes you pretty well. It's an article of yours on South Carolina that has somehow rubbed her feelings the wrong way."

"An article of mine? Not the one that appeared

recently in The Indicator!"

"Can't prove it by me," said the boy lightly. "You know best what slanders you've been perpetrating," and with heartless irresponsibility he grinned at the troubled countenance before him.

"Slanders?" eclaimed Russell, his brow contracting, "I never wrote a slanderous line in my life. If that's the article that has offended her, every word of it was true—every word! But all the same—" he laughed shortly and paced the narrow room with impatient strides, his hands clasped behind him, his head drooped forward, "one doesn't care to force unpalatable home truths on one's acquaintances."

"Miss Ray said it was a superficial study of condi-

tions," quoted Peter.

"Did she? Well, perhaps it was. . . . At any rate, it was uncalled for. The longer I live, the more I see the futility of such criticism. Look here—" he came to an abrupt pause before the boy and laid one hand upon his shoulder, "if you thought the man across the street was a consequential dreamer, and you believed his fine old house was in danger of tumbling down about his ears and that he couldn't support his family, would you go and tell him your opinions? Would it make him a better neighbor if you did?" and he shook the sturdy shoulder with nervous vehemence.

"Scott! no," returned Peter, staring back with some astonishment; for the self contained Russell was revealing himself in a totally new light—some leaping undercurrent of emotion had broken up all the surface calm of his nature. "But you didn't write anything like that,—did you?"

"Hardly!" said the author, releasing his hold. "Hardly! With our opulent vocabulary no one need ever descend to such rude English." He turned away abruptly and resumed his restless pacing.

"But I say—" it was Peter who broke the silence with something like a faint chuckle, "it's rather comical how she feels about her State. Now I'm reasonably patriotic, but I've never claimed that the sun rose and set in Rhode Island," and he grinned mirthfully. "But as for Miss Ray, I verily believe she has a notion that the first chapter of Genesis runs something like this: In the beginning God created South Carolina, and the rest of the earth was without form and void!" As the words left his lips the expression of Russell's face caused him to turn hastily.

Through the yellow portières Ray was entering the room. "Don't be irreverent, Peter," was her only comment, as she went quietly to the sideboard and poured out a tumbler of water from the earthen botijo on the shelf.

Russell went quickly forward with the parcel in his hand. "The portero intrusted this to me," he said.

At sight of the superscription the girl flushed vividly; setting her glass of water on the table, she tore away the paper wrapping and exposed to view the well worn morocco binding.

"Only think!" cried the irrepressible Peter. "Your gay cavalier brought it himself and warbled a serenade under your window—and I'll bet you never heard a note of it!"

She drew herself up with dignity, but the reproof died on her lips; for, at that moment, from between the leaves of the little volume, a tiny three cornered note fluttered out and skated across the floor to Russell's feet. He picked it up hastily and offered it to her with an unsmiling countenance. The color in her cheeks deepened to carnation as she thanked him and returned it to its place; then she lifted her glass from the table and left them with a grave Goodnight.

But once in her own room and the door closed, with ice cold, trembling fingers she tore the unread missive into bits and threw the fragments on the red coals in her brazier, where they were slowly browned to a crisp; then, with the long brass ladle that in Spain does poker duty, she pounded them into the ashes.

"What must he think of me?" she demanded, still fiercely pounding. "And what could have led to that speech of Peter's? Oh, it is horrible to feel that one has been—discussed!" Suddenly dropping the ladle, she lifted both hands to her burning cheeks.

CHAPTER XIII

It was Ash Wednesday, and the Carnival was over. Drifts of soiled confetti were ankle deep along the sidewalks; and, although an army of street cleaners were at work, the wind on the open Prado continually whirled up and scattered the dingy sweepings, hustling them under the rows of benches or behind the little booths that sentineled the square. A haze of thin gray cloud veiled all the sky, and the pallid sunlight failed to summon out a single shadow.

Beside the great fountain of Neptune, a stone's throw from the front entrance of the Royal Museum, Ray waited, wind blown but patient, her eyes turned toward the distant southern door whence she expected Peter, who had gone to the secretary's office for a permit to remove his latest copy. The minutes passed, and there were still no signs of him, so she leaned idly against the high marble rim of the fountain's basin and watched the drifting spray as it broke on the white figures of the sea god and his ocean steeds. When a sudden gust of wind flirted the drops in her face, she drew back a pace or two and discovered, close behind her, a young man embozado—as the Spaniards say—in the ample folds of his velvet bordered cloak.

As Ray scanned him with a hasty, unrecognizing glance, he drew down the muffling capa from a rather handsome face and smiled. "What!" he said, "you do not know me?"

"No," she replied, flushing with annoyance.

"But it is I—it is Teodoro," he persisted.

"I have no acquaintance of that name," she answered frigidly.

"Ah, señorita," urged the other, with a gesture of appeal, "why this trifling? I find you waiting here

where I implored you to meet me, and yet-"

She interrupted him. "You have mistaken me for someone else, caballero. I am waiting for no stranger but a friend, a friend—" she repeated with emphasis, "who will soon convince you of your mistake."

The young man laughed confidently: "But, Reina mia, I am that friend—it was I who found the little book of devotions, I who wrote the note. Have you no welcome for me now?"

"That note!" she cried with a flash of comprehension. "Why, I burned it without reading it. It was perhaps ungrateful of me, as I have you to thank for the return of my prayer book. . . . Do not cancel the obligation, caballero, by your—" she hesitated, her Spanish vocabulary supplying no word that was politely conclusive. The man's countenance, uncovered to the honest daylight, was not prepossessing; there was an insolent familiarity in his glance, and she shrank hastily away as he laid a hand beside hers on the marble rim.

"You burned it—yet you are here! Ah, Reina mia, you are not so cruel as you would have me think. I waited in vain yesterday, but today I am rewarded."

As the situation dawned on her she was speechless. Twice every week day she passed this fountain, but how was she to prove herself innocent now of keeping tryst? And the man was smiling, a smile that angered her beyond measure. The Carnival episode had struck her at first as an amusing anachronism: it had seemed like a bit of fourteenth century romance when the troubadour in his fantastic dress appeared at her elbow. But this—this was a trousered creature in a silk hat! This was a nineteenth century impertinence!

"Señor," she exclaimed, "you force me to speak plainly. Had I known the contents of your note, you would never have found me here. American women do not make their acquaintances upon the streets."

"So!" he said, following her as she walked rapidly

away, "the señorita is for the proprieties?"

Where was Peter? Why didn't Peter come? Ray's heart thumped disagreeably. To walk faster would make her conspicuous, and within plain view on the wide granite steps of the Museum stood a group of Spanish art students—omnipercipient youths who were doubtless interested witnesses to her every movement. It was unendurable! Desperately, she turned and faced him.

"Señor!" she cried, with an emphatic stamp on the flagged pavement—her vocabulary was adapted chiefly to courteous uses, but she would be as peremptory as she knew how. "Do me the favor to go another way!"

"At your orders, señorita," and he lifted his hat with an air. "For the present I accept my dismissal.

. . . But to burn a note without reading it is —pardon me—unlike a woman, be she American or

Spanish."

With a glance over her shoulder to convince herself that she was no longer followed, Ray hurried to the rear of the Museum and encountered Peter at the very door.

"Awfully sorry I kept you," he said, "but there's enough red tape here to supply the American government for six months. Why didn't you wait

instead of coming all the way round?"

She regarded him earnestly. "If I tell you, will you consider it a confidence and advise me like a friend, or will you go home and make a good story of it at the lunch table?"

"My dear girl," protested Peter, "did you ever know me to betray a confidence?"

"I have no proof," she said, with her face turned away from him, "but I think you have mentioned some things to Mr. Russell that I would have preferred you to keep silent about."

Peter flushed. "Well, perhaps—just a few little things—your adventure with the Carnival fellow, and—your opinion of his article. But that's all, I

assure you."

His companion made no comment, and with some pangs of conscience Peter moved round to the other side and stole a look into her face.

"Thunder!" he said, "do you mind it as much as that? Look here, Miss Ray, I vow I'll never mention your name again to a soul, I promise you I-"

"Don't take rash oaths you can't possibly keep," said the girl quietly, "but in future consider my feelings a little more."

They walked on in silence for some minutes, and then the irrepressible Peter plucked up his courage. "Didn't you say you wanted my advice about something?"

"On second thoughts," she announced with meaning, "I believe Dolores is much the best person to

apply to."

"Oh, no doubt you are wise," he agreed politely, and for the remainder of the walk they discussed indifferent matters; but on their light hearted comradeship a shadow had fallen, as unwonted as the dull gray clouds overhead. At the bottom of Ray's resentment was offended dignity. With most of us a sense of humor is but a fugitive possession, and the heartiest laugh at our own expense is smothered at the first suspicion of an echo. On the whole, too, the little South Carolinian took herself rather seriously; her opinions, her prejudices, her principles and her small proprieties were vital matters, not to be lightly discussed by other people. Henceforth, she would shelter herself behind a greater reserve; and when, as at present, she stood in need of a confidant, she would choose Dolores.

Accordingly, in their next twilight conversation, the señora learned the whole story of Ray's unknown admirer—so she naturally considered him, and her indignation was great against Francisco. Depend upon it, she declared, he had been chattering in the cafés, and, as the saying was, where one fly had discovered honey others would gather; Ray must leave the whole affair to her and she would speak her mind to the young officer, she would bid him inform his young friend Don Teodoro What's-his-name that the American señorita was here in Madrid for the purpose of studying Velazquez and she had no time and no desire to make the acquaint-ance of all the idle young popinjays in town!

But Ray, while she was moved to laughter at the wrathful solicitude of Dolores, felt the unconfessed half of her perplexities weigh heavier upon her spirits. Hardly a word had she exchanged with Mr. Russell since that Sunday night. A painful constraint lay upon both of them, for neither could decide whether he or she were most sinned against or

sinning.

Gray clouds prevailed throughout the remainder of that week, with an icy wind from the Guadarrama hills; and on Sunday morning, long before eleven o'clock, a tempestuous shower was spattering angrily on the window panes. Below, on the wet pavements, unfortunate pedestrians struggled helplessly with unmanageable umbrellas, while many a treacherous capa inflated itself suddenly and spread sailwise to the wind, betraying its owner to unpleasant surprises

in the rear. It was a day to be thankful for even the inhospitable brazier: with two small feet on the wooden rim of hers, Ray sat all the morning, deluding herself with the idea that she was writing letters, but really squandering the hours in troubled revery; and just on the other side of the thick partition wall her neighbor stumbled continually over his, as he paced the length of his narrow chamber from the door, which opened on the dining room, to his one window overlooking the Calle Mayor. But toward afternoon, when the rain had slackened somewhat and the heavy canopy of gray was lifting slowly, Russell's impatience drove him out into the streets.

It was growing dusk when he returned, thoroughly refreshed in mind and wearied in limb, with a sopping wet umbrella which he decided to put out

on the balcony to drain and dry.

As he stepped through his own tall window, he perceived that Miss Woodward had opened hers and was standing on the threshold, bending over the flower pots ranged on the balcony shelf. She had thrown a light wrap over her shoulders and the loose ends of it fluttered in the stiff breeze like the wings of a frightened bird; but her head was all uncovered, and, although the rain had ceased entirely, now and then a heavy drop splashed down from the eaves on the soft coils of her wind blown hair. He was sure she had seen him. But neither spoke.

Down below them, in the Calle Mayor, they could descry only a few open umbrellas—like moving blots on the pavement—and the shiny wet top of an occasional cab; on the opposite side of the street, where

the irregular roof line was brightly relieved against a sombre background of retreating clouds, the panes of the upper windows glittered blankly like inanimate glass eyes; to right and left of them were rows upon rows of iron balconies like their own, but empty. They were as isolated as two swallows on a chimney top.

At last the girl turned her head furtively, glanced across at her neighbor scarce six feet away, and

bowed.

"Good evening, Miss Woodward!" he quickly responded.

"Good evening," said she. "You were more venturesome than I," and she glanced at his umbrella.

"Yes, I had quite a tussle with the elements, but I enjoyed it." There was a little pause, and then he added: "The rain seems to have purged the gutters of the last of the Carnival confetti."

Ray smiled at him with arch intent. "I am very

glad," said she.

He was quick to catch her meaning and hinted:

"They had their day!"

"A brief one and ill timed," she answered innocently. "They are best forgotten. Spain is in no Carnival mood at present; nor—" her voice died to a tiny whisper but the wind tossed it to him "—am I."

"Ah, yes," he said, "after Carnival comes Lent."
"And penitence?" she queried softly, her fingers busy amid the wet geranium leaves, her head drooped so low that only the curve of a flushed cheek was visible from the adjoining balcony.

"Only for those who . . . have offended," was the answer.

"We are all miserable sinners," she murmured humbly.

"True," sighed he. "I have already ordered me a

suit of sackcloth."

"Really?" and then, like the swift gleam of a brook beneath a bank of willows, a laughing gray eye flashed at him from under sweeping lashes. "Poor you!" she bubbled, lifting her head high. If he meant to assume the penitential pose, she must take a different attitude or there would be no one to give absolution. "Look!" she cried, pointing over the roofs to a row of attic windows that glimmered ruddily in the dying light. "The sun must be setting red—so the new week will come in under clear skies to a clean world, like . . . a fresh page turned!" and nodding blithely, she stepped back out of sight and closed the window.

CHAPTER XIV

MADRID, February 25th, 1896.

My DEAR LOUISE:-

I have arrived at the conclusion that, while second thoughts are very much better than first impulses when it comes to deciding upon a line of action, in our estimate of character (I speak as a woman!) there is nothing better than a primary impression—the opinion that falls involuntarily from our lips when we brush elbows with a stranger. To illustrate, here are Mrs. Dering and Mr. Russell. When you have finished reading this letter you will better appreciate my earlier comments on the former. As far as the author is concerned, I began by liking him, and now I am disposed to feel more charity for his offenses. Dolores calls him "hombre de buena capa," and I say the cloak of his exceeding gentlemanliness would cover a multitude of sins.

Night before last, Mrs. Stafford, Peter and I went to call on Mrs. Dering. She was charming, absolutely charming; and her aunt, Mrs. Ward, whom I met then for the first time, is a sweet, unselfish woman—the kind of person who, whatever her past might have been, claims no place now in life but that of background. She reminds me of a certain bit of

Moorish drapery (concerning which you shall presently hear a tale of woe!) mellow toned and harmonious, its silken surface broidered over in graceful lines and pleasing hues. You feel her quality at once, her ideas although conventionalized have now and then a certain freedom and originality; but time has dulled the colors, rubbed the threads and blurred the pattern; she asserts herself no more. Her presence, however, adds a decided value to the

fresher charms of Mrs. Dering.

As a matter of course, Peter's fancy has been enslaved by the latter,—"swell girls," you must know, are his admiration. And really, I can understand his feeling. We art students, absorbed in the pursuit of beauty, are so apt to neglect it in ourselves. Of course I have a woman's fondness for pretty clothes, and if I had to choose in cold blood between a new spring hat and a tempting bit of bric-à-brac, I think the hat would carry the day; but if economy at the milliner's would enable me to gratify my greed as a collector, I should not hesitate to practice it—selfishly, perhaps, for no doubt it would be more public spirited to place the thing of beauty on my head where it could be a joy to all beholders instead of hiding it away in my trunk against the happy day when I set up my own little studio in Paris.

However, as I was saying, I quite sympathized with Peter's enthusiasm when he wondered what artist could possibly paint anything more successful as a picture than Mrs. Dering was that night. She attracted me so much that, for a time, I lost sight

of my first impression; but perhaps you have not forgotten what I wrote you after meeting her at the American Minister's. You shall judge now whether I have returned to that opinion.

She had promised to join our party for a bric-àbrac hunt in the Rastro, and Peter and I called for

her after our noon meal today.

I think I have never yet described to you that quaint old market place in the oldest corner of the city. It is really nothing more than a sudden widening of the ill paved street which straggles gently down a slope and gives up its dusty length, for about two hundred yards, to the booths and sheds and tables and piteous heaps of the dealers in old things. But what a picture it makes! Vivid blue skies tapering down between irregular lines of old tiled roofs and stretches of crumbling wall; yellow sunbeams slanting in, and on the dusty cobble stones alternate blocks of orange light and purple shadow; swarms of human beings meanly clad yet not unlovely, because with all of them the color instinct is so strong, and not a dingy figure there of man or woman but wears some bit of brightness-a red kerchief on the head or at the throat, a gay plaid shawl across the shoulders or a little crochetted wrap with a fringe of worsted balls that droops becomingly around a pretty face. And in the open street are the booths and tables, laden with rubbish of all sorts and colors. Cracked and dusty glassware—that glitters nevertheless when a sunbeam falls upon it; half worn articles of clothing; old tinware, rusty nails and keys-keys for every lock invented; knives

and daggers of every shape and description; old brasses—some of them genuine antiques; heaps and heaps of tattered books, of rags and papers: the flotsam of a seething city cast up here for a time, but ere long to be sought for again at some poor wretch's need and swept back into the current! Who knows but some of these old household goods may not return here again and again before they fall to pieces. A death, a little extra pinch of want, the hegira of a family, and then . . . Sweep out the attic chamber or the cellar room, pull down the lares and penates, gather the odds and ends together and trundle them off to the Rastro tables!

Some time ago, Mr. Stafford discovered, in one of the shops that open on this street, an old carved frame that would exactly fit the picture he has painted for the Salon; it needed but a touch of fresh gold leaf to be as good as new—and very much cheaper, a vital consideration for an impecunious artist. As it was, the price would be a heavy tax on their slender income, but the dealer had announced his ultimatum and the purchase was to be concluded

this afternoon.

Most of our studio belongings were obtained here in the Rastro shops, which offer every conceivable kind of second hand furniture, from deal tables and rush bottom chairs to marquetry and carved, mahogany.

The shop to which Mr. Stafford led us, this afternoon, is the most enticing of all. The proprietor, Don Paquito, is a thin little brown-faced man with twinkling eyes, happy natured, and liberal enough

when his wife is out of hearing. Doña Jesusa is stout and bland, with sleek brown braids and large gold ear-rings; and when she stands with hands on hips and shakes her head till the ear-rings rattle, there is nothing to be done but pay her price—or go your way. But it is so hard to tear oneself away! If I have ever sighed to be rich it was when under the spell of a dealer in antiquities.

An hour slipped by, and our party became scattered: Peter disappeared and the Staffords also; Mr. Russell was just outside the door, poring over a stack of musty volumes heaped upon the dirty pavement; Mrs. Dering and Doña Jesusa were bargaining over some rich old lace,—and the moment for which I had been patiently waiting arrived at

last.

Under a pile of old Carnival costumes, between a dingy curtain and a tarnished altar cloth, was a piece of Moorish embroidery that had tempted me for days. I could see the corner of it peeping out, and I begged Don Paquito to take it down for me. He did so, and together we unfolded it. It was about two yards long and wider still; soft old silk of a dull, indescribable blue with a singularly free and graceful pattern embroidered in pale yellow, old rose, purple and dead green. I feasted my eyes for a moment and then turned appealingly to the amiable little dealer. "And the price, Don Paquito, is it still the same?"

"Ten duros, señorita."

"That is a great sum," I murmured, wondering at the same time what economies it would entail.—And then, Louise, sad to relate, I departed from my ancestral traditions—I stooped to drive a bargain! "Say eight duros, amigo, and I will buy it of you."

Don Paquito looked toward his wife and shook his head. I took out my purse and began to count the silver. "Eight duros and a half, señorita, and it is

yours," he relented then.

"Agreed," said I, but not having the amount in change I placed in his hand a paper note. He went away to the till, and just at that moment (O Sisera, the stars in their courses fought against me too!) Doña Jesusa approached with Mrs. Dering and the latter cried out in ecstacy over my purchase.

"How much is this?" she demanded.

"I have already bought it," I replied, folding it jealously beneath her envious eyes.

The dealer's wife waylaid him on his return.

"What have you sold this for, Paquito?"

He confessed.

"Did I not say it was to be ten duros?" she exclaimed indignantly. "You have sacrificed it for so much less?"

"I would have given ten duros willingly," cried Mrs. Dering. "It is exquisite—I have never seen the like!" and she deliberately drew the stuff from my hands.

Doña Jesusa grew firm. "Ten duros is the price," she said, and laid her hands upon her hips.

"Here!" cried Mrs. Dering, opening her pocket

book in haste.

Don Paquito became excited. "But Jesusa mia, the little señorita must have the preference!"

I realized that I had one friend at court, and recklessly exclaimed: "Ten duros, caballero,"

"Twelve!" said Mrs. Dering.

My pride was up. "Twelve," I repeated.

"Fifteen!" said Mrs. Dering.

What matter if I went shoeless or hatless all the spring! Inarticulate now, I only nodded my head at

Don Paquito.

A delicate flush rose in Mrs. Dering's pretty cheeks, she turned to me in wonder at my stupidity. "I will give twenty, then—or more if necessary. Isn't it rather absurd to keep on running up the price this way?"

There was a hot lump in my throat as I turned away from her. Don Paquito followed me, with his eyes full of sympathy, and thrusting my money back into my hands declared: "It is Jesusa, señorita. I

can do nothing-nothing!"

Peter returned to us just as Mrs. Dering concluded her purchase. "Why, Miss Ray," he said, "how's this? I thought that Moorish stuff was your particular find. Didn't you mean to buy it?"

"Mrs. Dering out bid me," I whispered.

He opened wide his blue eyes. "You don't tell me!" he exclaimed. "What a shabby trick to play!"

"Sh!" I said rebukingly, and frowned him into silence—but I could have positively hugged the boy

for his indignation!

We called in our scattered party and recounted our various purchases. Mr. Stafford had secured his frame; Mrs. Stafford—provident soul—had bought two clean old sheets to cut up into paint rags; Peter's

pockets bulged with murderous weapons—Spanish daggers, sharp and keen, and Moorish knives like over grown razors; Mr. Russell, in turning over the heaps of tattered volumes, had discovered an ancient *Cancionero* that well repaid him for the trouble; Mrs. Dering displayed yards of old lace, a rosary of coral and silver—and my lost, lamented drapery! As for me, I had nothing at all; my afternoon had not been a success, and I felt rather depressed in spirit.

When we left Don Paquito's door the Rastro tables were being cleared for the night; there was quite a stir among the open booths as the goods and chattels were stored away in safer quarters. Peter and I walked on ahead, the Staffords followed and Mrs. Dering brought up the rear with Mr. Russell. I taxed Peter with his desertion of our guest, but he shrugged

Peter with his desertion of our guest, but he shrugged his shoulders protestingly. "She shook me!" he declared with elaborate indifference. So Mr. Russell was allowed to conduct the lady back to her hotel.

Later on, when he rejoined us at the dinner table, he mentioned the fact that she intended to leave Madrid next week for Cordova, Granada and other points in the south of Spain. I fancy that he does not altogether approve this plan or hers, in view of the present political situation. You probably understand this better than I, as we see no American newspapers now but the Paris edition of the *Herald*—and that very irregularly. But, as we have been treated by the Spaniards with such perfect courtesy, *I* can see no objection to the two ladies traveling alone—and I shall not be sorry to say goodbye to Mrs. Dering!

CHAPTER XV

"Who's seen a newspaper this morning?" demanded Peter, at lunch time on the following Sunday; he gesticulated with a folded copy of *El Pais*, and wore the face of one who had something to communicate. "Who knows what's up?"

"I've just returned from the Legation, where I heard the news," said Mr. Russell, "probably a later and more accurate account than you could obtain from a Spanish paper—and a populist one at that."

"Then give us your version, do!" besought the boy, shaking out the ink besmeared sheet in his hand, "for I've been at this all the morning, and the only thing I've discovered so far is that Spain—or the editor—is hopping mad about something and is taking it out in abusing the 'jingoismo' of Yankees in general and some 'senador yankee' in particular. Will you please observe the border that surrounds this page—letters an inch high and black as a chimney sweep: VIVA ESPANA CON HONOR!—Who's been hurting its little feelings?"

Russell glanced over the lad's shoulder to where Mr. Stafford waited in the background, gravely

expectant.

"Well?" the latter questioned.

"A concurrent resolution was passed yesterday the news has just been cabled."

Ray looked up intelligently, but Mrs. Stafford turned a blankly inquiring face toward her husband. "Do be more explicit," she implored. "I haven't

taken in the situation yet."

Russell bent to her pleasantly. "Our two Houses of Congress have declared their opinion that a condition of public war exists between the government of Spain and the people of Cuba, and have resolved, moreover, that the United States should recognize the Cubans as a belligerent people struggling for their independence."

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, "I thought everybody recognized that long ago-they've been

very belligerent for quite a while."

"My dear Emma-" began Mr. Stafford, but the

author patiently continued his explanation:

"Such a step, however, on the part of a powerful neighbor would greatly affect the situation. If President Cleveland endorses the action of Congress, the Cubans will find themselves in a much stronger position than they have heretofore occupied as insur-

gents rebelling against constituted authority."

"I say though," Peter interrupted, "your news only arrived this morning, and no doubt it will add life to the situation; but this sheet went to press last night, and from what I gather here 'el senador yankee,' Mr. Somebody-or-other, has already been making remarks that Spain doesn't want to swallow. Please translate us this paragraph—" and he passed the paper down the table. "Do you find anything in that so very insulting to her honor?"

Russell read it first in silence. "It is possible," he said, "that in the original English this speech may have been differently worded, but this version could hardly fail to touch Spain's most vulnerable point—

her pride. I will translate literally.

"'If the action which we propose to take will not free the island from the clutches of Spain, our next step will—or, if not the next, then the one which will follow that. And Cuba will raise herself upon the pedestal of the nations, free, sovereign and independent. Spain knows it. But she would prefer to lose Cuba at the point of the sword in an encounter with the United States, rather than cede her to us for money or grant independence to the Cubans. Spain would be very grateful to us if we should take it at the point of the sword. Very well, then, our duty is to unsheathe the weapon, lay it on the table and say to her: If you wish it, take it!"

"This looks like war," said Mr. Stafford.

The author shook his head dubiously. "And yet, from what I heard at the Legation, that does not seem to be their opinion. But everything depends upon the President's course."

"Well, Emma," sighed the artist, turning to his wife, "it's a very selfish way to look at it, but I'm afraid this knocks our little program into a cocked

hat. No Holy Week in Seville for us!"

"Why so?" asked Russell, "I can't imagine why it should make any difference to you. Artists are privileged beings; even in case of war I should think you would be safe and unmolested."

But Mr. Stafford, not caring to explain how impossible it would be for them to exist if cut off for any length of time from communication with the American dealers on whom they depended chiefly

for their support, made no reply.

The newspaper, when Russell laid it aside, had been taken up by Ray; and now she broke out with a little exclamation: "I never expected to see the time when Yankee would be a generic name for all citizens of the United States! But when it comes to international compliments I think the Spaniards are our equals. Have you read all this?"

"Do you mean," asked Russell rather constrainedly, "that to class you with Yankees is an affront?"

"Viva South Carolina con honor!" exclaimed a

mischievous voice at her elbow.

"Peter, you great goose, be silent! Suppose either of our Spanish friends were to come in suddenly and hear you!" chided the girl with rising color, then turning her gray eyes on the author she quickly replied: "I am sure I said nothing that could be so interpreted. If you will glance down that column you will see that the word Yankee is usually coupled with offensive epithets. And the concluding paragraph is a boastful assertion that Spain would spend, if necessary, her last dollar in defense of her national honor, incomprehensible as such a course would be to a people that worships the golden calf."

The look with which Russell heard this explanation so warmly implored her pardon for his misconstruction of her previous remark that her eyes involuntarily fell beneath it. In the pause that followed, Mr. Stafford regretted that he had not seen for several days the Paris Edition of the New York Herald.

"My latest copy is at your service," the author said, "but it is two—three days old by now. I would like to see the *Heraldo* or the *Correspondencia*. This populist sheet doesn't reflect the sentiments of the more educated and conservative citizens."

"May be not!" cried Peter, "but when there's a row it's not usually the educated and conservative class that makes it. The rabble is reading *El Pais* at this minute. Every portero, every torero, all the old guards in the gallery—in fact, one fourth of the city—reads nothing else."

"True," commented Russell thoughtfully. "Is that why you always buy it, Harding? It's not a bad

idea to keep a finger on the pulse of the mob."

Ray laughed then, and Peter blushed. "Their office is just across the way," said the boy, and threw an appealing glance at his young comrade—but all in vain.

"My innings!" she exclaimed with relish. "You must know, friends, that Don Pedro's little pin girl has gone into the newspaper business . . . for which he furnished the capital, pledging himself to buy his daily paper from her on condition that he is not expected to purchase any more pins."

"Was forced to do it in self defense," muttered Peter from behind his napkin. "Got stuck every

day—literally as well as figuratively."

"But it was so convenient for me," said Ray, bowing to the two Spaniards whose entrance at that moment precluded any further reference to the political situation. "When I bought my daily boutonnière I always knew where to turn for a pin."

"You must be very fond of violets," observed the author, lowering his voice as he bent toward her. "I notice you always wear a bunch of those pale blue ones that grow wild in the Retiro. But they are quite scentless, aren't they?"

"Not entirely so. There is a sweet freshness about them, a woodsy odor that makes me think of home and my childhood. We always spent the Easter holidays on a rice plantation in the tide-water country," for the life of her she couldn't resist a challenging smile, "the country, you know, of cypress and cedar, of laurel and live-oak, of Spanish bayonets and long gray moss. In springtime the woods there are hung with yellow jessamine, and the ground is covered with wild white lilies and big blue violets like these."

It occurred to Russell, just then, that Mrs. Dering also wore violets very frequently; but somehow on her they became merely the floral accessories of her costume. With Miss Woodward it was different; she bent her fresh young face to the pale hued blossoms on her bosom with something of the tenderness with which one caresses the cheek of a little child. She was proposing now to the Staffords that they should all spend the afternoon in the Retiro, where the breath of the coming spring would be soonest felt, and the idea rather appealed to Russell; he regretted that a promise to call on some of his

Spanish friends would prevent his joining them. Peter also declined on the plea of an engagement

with Don Francisco to attend the bull fight.

"You'll have to go sometime yourself, Miss Ray," he urged her privately after lunch. "It's the greatest show on earth, and the artistic effect—the color and all that—makes you forget about the disgusting cruelty. We'll have to make up a party sometime and take you along. Francisco and I are hardly chaperons enough, eh?—Say, how do you like my new sombrero—quite Spanish, isn't it?" and he twirled a wide gray felt on the tip of his finger.

"If it didn't make you look so much more like a

cherub, you'd be the image of a bull fighter."

"Think so really? I imagined it was rather good form—but everything 'torero' is tip-top style, so it's all right. Doesn't Francisco look a swell in his capa? If it wasn't so late in the season I'd buy one myself. Overcoats are not to be named in the same day with them; they give a fellow so much more of an air, or—as the natives say—'se va mas garboso!"

The memory of the boy's bright face as he waved goodbye to them, remained with Ray all the afternoon. There was something so fresh and clean about Peter. She wondered, with sisterly anxiety, if a year or two of bohemian Paris would rob his clear blue eyes of any of their happy straightforwardness. "I hope not," she thought earnestly, "I do hope not!

. . . But for every successful artist that Paris makes, I wonder how many young men she mars?"

It was rather dull now, going without him; he would have lent to their expedition a holiday spirit that joyed in everything. The Staffords were not enlivening companions; they were people who never left their cares behind. The wife's talk flowed on as usual in gentle platitudes, but her cheerfulness was sadly forced and affected one with a sense of strain, like a song pitched in too high a key; and the artist was utterly silent, studying with holloweyed concentration every street vista, every picturesque figure in the moving mass of pedestrians, as though his fingers itched to hold a brush and transfer the effect to canvas. Of late he had been positively obsessed with the desire to work; his brain never rested, and under the silky ripples of his long brown beard his face grew thinner daily. Ray was struck by the hot intentness of his gaze as the three of them waited by the lamp-post on the Puerta del Sol, for the leisurely street car that was to convey them to the park. "I wonder," she thought pityingly, "if it ever occurs to him that this lovely world was created for other than a painter's uses! He looks at high heaven as though it were a frescoed ceiling and detects the brush marks in the clouds!"

Just then the yellow car, with its team of lazy mules, came jangling up and halted; the trio climbed in, the conductor gathered their fares, delivering to each a slip of green paper by way of receipt, and retired to the front platform to await the coming of more passengers. The long ears of the mules drooped sleepily in the afternoon sunlight, and at the door the driver held forth to his companion in a

drowsy monologue. Inside, the Staffords leaned back in their seats, silent and thoughtful; and Ray, smothering a yawn, fell to studying the advertisements in the car windows, to each one of which was affixed the war tax of a five centimo stamp. But finally, with jerk and jangle, the car moved off down the Alcalá.

Through this street lay their daily route to the studio; and now as they passed the handsome *Equitable* building, that displayed over its door, in glittering gold leaf, the American coat-of-arms, Ray gave a smiling thought to Peter—who regularly doffed his hat to the eagle with what he called "a patriotic thrill!"

A few blocks further on, they forsook the car and

entered the great iron gate of the park.

With its wide squares and spacious avenues, its open vistas and long perspectives, Madrid has no lack of breathing places; but the Retiro is a generous expanse of country clasped in the city's arms—inexpressibly dear to the hearts of all its people.

Just within the gateway, one meets always a throng of pretty nursemaids and babies, of staid duennas with little boys and bigger girls, of young mothers—and fathers, too—out with the children for a promenade. On either side of the broad walk are stone benches, placed at intervals, where on dry and pleasant days the mothers and nurses may sit and gossip while their charges romp and play together on the turf behind. There are no orders to *Keep off the Grass* in the Retiro—Ray noted this with satisfaction. True, there was not much grass at this

season to be preserved: only here and there, among the fallen leaves, were patches of tender green; and farther off, under the bare branches of the chestnut trees, away from the more frequented walks and the constant trampling of little feet, the brown mould was purpled faintly with wild violets.

Our three Americans wandered slowly down the long central avenue—where statues of former kings and queens of Spain smile on the populace in calm unconsciousness of any wrongs they may have perpetrated during life. On the rows of motionless figures the afternoon sunlight was glistening whitely, and beside each pedestal a foreshortened shadow fell in a dark blot upon the turf. Ray walked a few paces behind the artist and his wife, who were talking of their own plans and the changes they would be forced to make if the political outlook became more threatening.

The girl would have shut her ears to it all. It was so sweet and still in these peaceful paths; the air was soft on her cheek, and against the clear blue sky she could plainly see, on the bare limbs of the chestnuts meeting overhead, the buds just beginning to swell. It was the first of March, she thought, the first day of the first month of spring. "Spring!" she repeated, her gray eyes filling, "and Timrod wrote of her

'Lifting her bloody daisies up to God!'

Does history always repeat itself? Must every generation drink of the same cup?"

Mr. Stafford was saying: "Of course, Emma, if

war is declared, we will go direct to Paris."

But it was impossible! thought Ray; and forgetting the bitter struggle that was going on across the water in the island where Spain's banner was flying still, knowing little or nothing of the starving women and children, and the horrors of Weyler's campaign, she quoted softly to herself:

"Ah! who would couple thoughts of war and crime With such a blessed time!"

and she listened to the distant echoes of babies' laughter, and smiled as she perceived, in the corner of a hedge all powdered with delicate green, a mantilla keeping tryst with a sombrero.

The shadows had lengthened greatly when Mr. Stafford proposed to turn, and by this time they had skirted the little lake and reached the northern corner

of the park.

"Let us go out by the nearest gate and find a cab," suggested Ray. "The cars are always 'Completo' at this hour."

She forgot, however, that—it being Sunday afternoon—every cochero had gone to the bull ring in the
certainty of getting a fare. Not an empty cab was
in sight, but a long procession of vehicles rumbled
homeward from the Circus: carriages first, with
well groomed horses and smart liveried coachmen;
hired broughams of fairly presentable appearance,
but robbed of all style by the tell tale number on the
driver's seat; cabs, rather less pretentious, but
cheap enough at two pesetas for the trip. Faster

and faster they came, and, wherever they passed, the light dust, beaten by hoof and wheel, rose up in clouds.

"What a pity we crossed the street!" exclaimed Mr. Stafford, after they had looked on at the rolling torrent for fully ten minutes without espying a single unoccupied vehicle. "Shall we venture back and return the way we came?"

His wife looked nervous. "Let us wait," she

"Yes, do!" cried Ray, "it's an interesting sight—and perhaps some belated cochero at the end of the

procession may be glad to stop for us."

The better class of vehicles had all passed now, but cabs and wagons rattled by at frantic speed, the drivers cracking their whips and cheering loudly. The air was full of noisy cries and shrill whistling sounds that had rather a sinister effect. And the rabble was arriving—the crowd that in the Circus sits just behind the barrier, where the seats are cheapest and the odor of blood freshly spilled rises warm in their nostrils. Down each side of the street they came afoot, with shambling gait and swinging arms, and now and then a hoarse murmur rose and swelled into a shout.

The artist, waiting patiently on the sidewalk with two women to be cared for, suddenly bent forward and listened; then, taking his wife's arm, he declared: "We must go back to the park at once! Follow me, Miss Ray!"

She wondered how they were to cross in the path of those frantic teams, but followed obediently till

the middle of the street was reached. And there a wild stage, two-decked, crowded fore and aft with yelling demons and careening like a ship at sea, the team of eight frightened mules galloping at full

speed, thundered down upon them.

Right in its path an old man stood, a familiar figure in a weatherbeaten cloak stained here and there to mellow shades of olive green. He waved his shabby stick in tremulous warning to the reckless driver, faltered then, and turning desperately, missed the cruel hoofs by one providential instant; but the foremost wheel striking him sharply, he staggered and

fell prostrate at Ray's feet.

Mr. Stafford had borne the half senseless woman in his arms to safety on the opposite pavement when the young art student, arrested by that most piteous of all sights on earth—gray hairs lying in the dust—seized the old model with two slender nervous hands and dragged him backward to the nearer sidewalk. He was unhurt but stupefied, and though Ray helped him to his feet and thrust his stick between his knotted fingers, his feeble limbs refused to bear his weight and he sank down again upon a curbstone, wagging his gray beard in senile imbecility and muttering: "Virgen Maria! Madre de mi Dios!"

Distractedly, Ray turned from him to see, in a cab racing by, two faces she knew well. "Peter!" she called, "Peter!" But her voice was drowned by the rattling wheels, the cracking whips, the screaming whistles. Leaving the old man still cowering on the curbstone, she made a brave effort to rejoin the Staffords. Twice, three times, she essayed the

crossing, only to be driven back each time in honest fear; then, realizing that the torrent of vehicles must soon run dry, she waited eagerly, straining her eyes for a glimpse of the two friends on the other side.

But the black stream on the pavement was also pouring down. Above the noise of hoofs and wheels the hoarse murmur swelled again—nearer this time, much nearer—and a surly voice at her elbow echoed it lustily:

"To the house of the Yankee! To the house of

the Yankee!"

Poised for flight on the pavement's edge, Ray heard it—and divined the temper of the mob. Too late she sped into the street. The rabble was there before her. It clung to the hindmost vehicles, it trailed in the wake of the wheels.

"To the house of the Yankee! Viva España!"

From sidewalk to sidewalk, from wall to wall, it spread in an angry tide; muttering and cursing, it surged about the unprotected girl and swept her along against her will. Dark faces, lowering brows, blasphemous lips surrounded her; menacing arms were lifted high, heavy stones were clutched vindictively in ugly fingers; she was half suffocated by the fervid breaths in that mass of brutalized humanity. On went the mob, heedless of the slight figure almost swooning in the thick of it.

"To the house of the Yankee!" it roared, and swirling angrily at the corner hurled itself into the

Calle Serrano.

"Down with the Americans! Viva España con honor!"

CHAPTER XVI

Alarmed by the heavy trampling and the ominous murmurs of the mob without, all the residents of the Calle Serrano had crowded to their windows; and, from one of the second story balconies of a handsome house near the corner, an anxious group of ladies and gentlemen watched the progress of that black current toward the home of the American Minister.

"Have but a little patience, caballero—the police will arrive in a moment. It is impossible that any outrage will be permitted—quite impossible!" so a tall, distinguished Spaniard with silver gray hair declared emphatically to his immediate neighbor, whose sinewy young hands were tightly clenched upon the iron railing, and whose eyes flashed indignation.

"Si, Señor Rosail, they are coming—they are

coming now! I hear the hoof beats!"

"Gently, gently, Consuelo," murmured a sweet faced señora to the very pretty little brunette at her side. "But they do arrive—I hear them also."

So did Russell, and with a sigh of infinite relief he turned to the first speaker and smiled apologetically. "I suppose, at the worst, they would have smashed only a few window panes. But you must admit, Don Rafael, that I could hardly be expected

to look on calmly."

"You could have done nothing but perhaps get yourself killed, which would have been infinitely worse than the breaking of a few panes of glass," interposed the Spanish lady; and then the thud of the hoofs grew unmistakably near and a company of the city's mounted police galloped down in the face of the advancing mob.

Russell leaned forward again over the railing, and in the shallow recess of a doorway opposite he espied for the first time a slender shrinking figure and a

small white terrified face.

How he reached the street he never knew, but a moment later he was struggling in the surly stream, fighting his way to the opposite pavement. Soon, very soon—though to him the interval seemed endless—he had gained her side and had caught the outstretched hands in his. Meanwhile the black drift, checked in its onward course, was falling back upon itself, and, as the tide still poured in from the rear, the pressure in the congested street was suffocating —crushing. Russell, thanking Heaven for his own young strength and his stalwart frame, thrust the girl back into the shallow doorway and planted himself before it with an arm braced firmly against either side. Then, mindful of the ebbing blood in the wax-white cheeks so close to his, he smiled at her:

"You seem to have rather a predilection for street riots, Miss Ray!"

A faint response flickered on her lips and went out suddenly as a sharp volley of shots cracked amid the turmoil.

"Blank cartridges, no doubt," was his prompt assurance. "Don't be alarmed, it will be all over in a moment."

"I'm not frightened — now," she honestly declared, and the color crept back into her face and lips. Close against the wall she leaned with clasped hands and heaving bosom, and over her bent the young man, bareheaded and disheveled, until with the wavering and breaking of the intimidated rabble the pressure behind him was somewhat lessened; then, with his left hand about her waist, his right cleaving a passage, he regained the open doorway on the other side of the street where his friend, Don Rafael de Tolosa, met them warmly and full of a deep concern for the American girl.

With the consciousness of safety, a strange giddiness had overtaken her. Afterward, she recollected having felt the cold smoothness of a polished stair rail, and a child's warm fingers entwined in hers; but of what was said to her, or of how she climbed the carpeted steps to the floor above, her memory

retained no record.

On the upper landing, a Madonna-like countenance separated itself from a cluster of kindly solicitous faces, and she went to meet it, led by the child's warm fingers. A door opened to receive her, a softly padded chair seemed to approach of its own accord, a voice murmured, "Pobrecita!" and then she was afloat amid darkness and infinite space.

But soon a throng of wavering, nebulous ideas gathered into a concrete impression of gentle ministrations. A pungent odor pervaded the atmosphere, a soft hand was bathing the bruised place on her temple where she remembered to have felt, in some horrible past, the cruel contact of a roughly plastered wall. And kneeling at her feet was a gypsy of a child who regarded her with round-eyed consternation.

Ray sat up quickly, with a shocked fear lest she had been misbehaving, and Señora de Tolosa smiled encouragement, despatching the twelve-year-old Consuelo with a reassuring message to the anxious group collected at the door. A white aproned maid was deftly restoring the crushed ribbons of her hat to their aforetime air of dignified coquetry; and, amid little feminine cries of commiseration and regret, the storm tossed refugee preened all her ruffled plumage and soon declared herself sufficiently composed in spirit to meet the señora's other guests in the adjoining room.

There were about eight or ten of these grouped familiarly in the handsomely appointed but somewhat formal sala, where most of the furnishings impressed Ray as being survivals of various ancestral tastes rather than the deliberate selection of their present possessors. As in many an old Charleston home, she noted the reverential enshrinement of old miniatures and curios in the inlaid cabinets that were half invisible against the darkly papered wall, and the air of dignified retirement from active service—or profane uses—with which several carved

and gilded chairs and sofas ranged themselves down each side of the long apartment. It was from houses such as this that the choicest spoils of the Rastro had descended.

The guests were gathered in a semicircle before the inevitable tall French window, and a noiseless waiter was serving them with hot chocolate, cloy-

ingly sweet and thick as cream.

Ray accepted a cup and a chair at Russell's side, where she at once became the centre of observation, and was forced to relate the chain of circumstances which had involved her in the afternoon's excitement. On her other hand was a young captain of the Guards whom her hostess had introduced as Don Enrique de Silvela, and the American girl decided that he was the most attractive Spaniard of her acquaintance. His gallantry differed from that of Don Francisco in that it was tempered by intelligence, and he had an ease of manner that was lacking in Don Antonio-who was essentially a man of affairs. She liked his voice and his face, and especially his earnest assurances that the outbreak of the rabble was no reflection of the sentiments of the better classes in Madrid.

"We desire nothing more earnestly, señorita," he said in very correct English, "than the continuance of our friendly relations with your government—which, up to the present, has exhibited great forbearance; for it is to be understood that a war at your very doors must be disturbing and inconvenient." Then, with a humorous glance that passed her over and sought Russell's eye, he added: "We

are still of the opinion that behind the ardor of your Cuban sympathizers there is more sugar than philan-

thropy!"

The girl professed her own ignorance of recent American politics; for she was too weary, and too troubled at the thought of Mr. Stafford's anxiety, to sustain a conversation. Russell had already perceived this; and as the street below was now comparatively clear, he suggested their withdrawal. A servant was despatched for a cab, and soon afterward, their farewells having been made, the two drove off together in the early twilight.

For about five minutes both were very silent, each thinking of the other, yet appearing wholly occupied with the remnants of the mob still lurking in the side streets or swaggering boldly on the corners. The Prado was full of a vacillating, curious crowd that would gather rapidly in silent flocks about those who had aught to tell, and, at the first approach of a guardian of the peace, as quickly

scatter.

When their cab had rolled into the Alcalá, Ray—who had all a woman's dread of silence—turned to

her companion with a laugh.

"I'm afraid," she said, "I would make a very poor heroine of romance. This afternoon I was only a helpless atom of humanity that might have been very easily crushed quite out of existence. It's very humiliating—to realize how little one counts in the sum of the world's affairs!—to have one's Ego wake up to the consciousness that it is not the pivot of the universe! But do you suppose that even Emer-

son—though he might have found it possible to 'sit at home and not suffer himself to be bullied by empires and kings'—could have maintained that pose in the middle of a mob?"

Russell smiled. "I am sure—leaving Emerson out of the question—that neither your courage nor your philosophy can be gauged by your physical powers.—But are you certain you are not hurt?" and his face, as he bent over her, was full of a tender concern.

"Only a little bruised and shaken," she answered lightly. "A phrenologist would probably find my head an interesting study,—I am sure my right bump of constructiveness is something abnormal!" Then, flushing under his look of distress, she exclaimed: "What an ending to a perfect afternoon! It is hard to realize that two hours ago I was picking violets in the Retiro and quoting Timrod's *Spring*. But I understand now, as I never did before, the passionate protest in the final stanzas of that poem."

"I'm sorry I can't recall them," Russell said. "In fact, I'm not familiar with any of Timrod's poetry

-except his Carolina."

"That, of course," said Ray. "But why haven't you considered it worth your while to discover him? We know and love your Lowell and Holmes and Longfellow—but I suppose you don't look for literature south of Mason and Dixon's line."

"Oh!" he protested laughingly, with a glance that

quelled the rising mutiny in the gray eyes.

"Well," she relented, "if you'll promise me to cull for yourself, when you can, some of his 'Southern asphodels of song' I'll forgive you, but—oh, look!" and she seized his arm, "Look! Mr. Russell, just look at that! Those students yonder—they are brickbatting, positively brickbatting our eagle!"

It was true: the golden emblem over the door of the *Equitable* building was being grossly insulted by a group of disorderly youths. The sight of it made Russell's forehead burn and his lips draw close.

"Can't we stop them?" cried the girl excitedly.

"Can't we interfere?"

Russell ground his teeth. "No," he said, "no!" and just then two mounted policemen galloped by and ordered the youths immediately to desist—

which they did, vociferating but obedient.

"You see," said Russell, when their cab had passed beyond sight, "today's outrages have been an offense against the peace of the city only. So long as the municipal authorities are enforcing order, we have no right to interfere. Our position now is one of responsibility; if any of us, actuated by a mistaken sense of patriotism, were to become involved in a riot and injured—or perhaps killed—it would give a sinister complexion to these rather harmless ebullitions of ill feeling and might precipitate the very thing that our ministers are trying to prevent. For at this crisis the death or maltreatment of an American citizen would be a sufficient casus belli."

Ray drew a deep breath and leaned back in her seat. "Yes," she said, "you are right, you are perfectly right. I never thought of that—in fact, I never thought at all! I was just—furious! I

believe—" she laughed nervously and her eyes were moist and brilliant, "just at that moment I must have felt what Peter would have called a patriotic thrill!"

CHAPTER XVII

Peter and Don Francisco had already dismissed their cochero when the news of the outbreak overtook them; but immediately, impelled by a youthful craving for excitement, they summoned another cab and departed post haste for the Calle Serrano. On their way, they encountered Mr. Stafford, who had left his wife in a very nervous condition just inside the gate of the park and was searching distractedly for his missing charge. The two young men promptly assumed the task of finding her, placing their cab meanwhile at Mrs. Stafford's disposal.

By this time the riot had been quelled and the mob was ebbing into the Alcalá, which was densely crowded for several blocks. The young men searched unremittingly for more than an hour, but of course without success; then, as twilight was setting in, Francisco advised their return to the Calle Mayor where—if the señorita had not yet arrived—they could make prompt application to the gobernador

civil.

However, just as they were dismounting from a street car on the corner of the Puerta del Sol, the cab containing Russell and Miss Woodward rolled past them. A shout from Peter caused the cochero to pull up, and the two pedestrians overwhelmed the girl with questions.

"Talk about a boy's propensity for getting into scrapes!" exclaimed Peter, dimpling with relief, "why, Miss Ray could give any fellow half a day's start and tumble in, head and shoulders deeper, before night! And the worst of it is that she does it so innocently! When I get into mischief, I don't want too close an investigation; but bless you! if Miss Ray were to paint the whole town red, you'd probably find out that she did it as an object lesson to a Sunday-school!"

After dinner that night, Russell betook himself to the hotel, where the news of the riot had preceded him—but had in no wise shaken Mrs. Dering's resolve to leave for Cordova on the following day.

"Why—" she demanded, "should a disturbance made by a few Spanish rowdies affect my movements? I might have felt differently if the authorities had taken no notice of them; but they say that the Legation and the Minister's residence are to be surrounded by a cordon of police until everything has quieted down."

"That will be no protection to you," Russell

reminded her.

"But we are private citizens—and who is to know we are not English, if we don't proclaim our nationality? Why, our passports have not been visé since we left Paris! I do think, Mr. Russell, you are unnecessarily anxious. Please—" and she grew beseeching, "don't communicate your fears to Aunt Elizabeth, for she is strongly in favor of taking the next northward bound train and not stopping short of

French territory—while my idea is to make a flying trip through southern Spain and then go on to Italy. I've positively decided to spend Easter in Rome—and no arguments will move me!"

"I won't attempt any, provided you agree to postpone your departure a day or two," promised Russell, "but if you are then of the same mind, and the situation warrants it, I will give myself the pleasure of seeing you aboard your steamer."

"That would be charming!" she declared. "I'll

wait over, on those terms, until Thursday."

And so the matter rested.

Meanwhile, over telegraph lines and transatlantic cables, flashed the story of the abortive attack on the envoy of the United States. Soon, ugly reports appeared in the American papers; on Tuesday, Mr. Stafford received a cablegram, from a prominent weekly journal, requesting a full page illustration of the scene of Sunday afternoon; and on the same day, the Paris edition of the New York Herald in ominous black headlines announced RUMORS OF WAR! Thornton cabled his friend an anxious reminder of the promise made in Tangier two months before—and Russell read the little blue strip with a set countenance and thrust it impatiently in his pocket. The four artists worked feverishly at their incompleted studies, but hesitated about beginning anything new.

One morning Peter came in rather flushed and excited, declaring that a mischievous golfo on the street had thrown an empty tomato can at his head, and had taken flight immediately before retribution

could be meted out. But the lunch table committee, deliberating over this, decided finally that it was to be regarded rather as a personal compliment than as an anti-American demonstration. News of genuine disturbances, however, reached them daily; in Barcelona a very serious riot had occurred, and in several other towns there had been trouble, instigated chiefly by the students.

But Wednesday afternoon found Mrs. Dering serenely obstinate: her trunks had been packed for days; her courier had once more made all the arrangements for her departure the next morning. "If you'd really like to join us, we should be delighted to have you," she told Russell, "especially Aunt Elizabeth, who will insist on feeling nervous—as though anything could possibly happen to two

ladies on a pleasure trip!"

The author returned to his lodgings and packed a portmanteau; arranged his heavier belongings for immediate transportation, in case of need, and intrusted Peter with the care of them; paid Dolores for his room a month in advance, but declared his intention of returning as soon as possible; received a polite farewell from Ray—to whom this sudden move admitted of but one explanation; and on Thursday morning departed—as Thornton would have said—"in the tail of the comet!"

The surprise of his friends was voiced by Peter at the lunch table. "Positively," said the boy, "you could have knocked me down with a feather! I hadn't a suspicion that Russell was so completely gone on Mrs. Dering—not the faintest suspicion of it!" Ray, however, decided inwardly that she had seen previous signs of a mutual attraction—also, that it was

the most natural thing in the world.

During the week that followed, their thoughts were occupied chiefly with all the floating rumors that came to them from sources reliable and otherwise. Occasionally, they were tempted to discuss the situation with Don Antonio, who spoke very guardedly—as became a clerk of the *Ministerio de la Guerra* in possession, probably, of inside information. Francisco, however, loudly echoed the sentiments expressed in the tertulias of the Café Fornos—that Spain could well afford to overlook the blatant *jingoismo* of a few Yankee senators so long as it failed to receive the endorsement of their chief executive.

All the political cartoons which were appearing in the Spanish papers were collected carefully by Peter, and two of them afforded him considerable entertainment—Spain, disguised as the Knight of La Mancha, tilting against a flock of Yankee sheep; and Uncle Sam's machine for utilizing the sweepings of the world at large in the manufacture of American citizens—weak-kneed little gentleman in silk hats, who emerged from the open spout like sausage meat from an enormous chopper.

"I declare, Peter," cried Ray, inspecting these pictorial sneers as they were tacked up on the studio wall, "I think we'll have to send your photograph to the artist just to show him what an American citi-

zen really looks like!"

"Well," said Peter modestly, "I'm a pretty fair sample, eh? Height, six-feet-two; weight, one hundred and eighty-seven; age, twenty-one years—and just spoiling for a fight! Don't you think a personal call would be more effective than a photo?"

Then Mr. Stafford quietly forbade either. "The less conspicuous we make ourselves now, the better," he declared. "If the President thinks it inadvisable to accord belligerent rights to the Cubans, this whole unpleasantness may blow over. I'm sure I hope it will! That Venezuelan difficulty is hardly settled—and we are really not prepared for a conflict with a strong maritime power."

Peter cried "Stuff!" and charged an imaginary foe with his mahl-stick, announcing loudly that he would just like to see the country that America

couldn't whip!

But Ray broke in thoughtfully: "Mr. Stafford is right; Mr. Russell said very much the same thing: it would be a mistaken sense of patriotism that prompted any of us to stir up more ill feeling at a time like this."

"Well, I reckon I have some discretion," the boy retorted. "Did you hear those students in the Prado this morning? They marched right under the gallery windows singing incendiary songs; and although I'm not such a duffer at Spanish that I couldn't understand what they meant, I just chewed up a paint brush and held my tongue through it all. But I'll tell you one thing—if war is ever declared, goodbye Paris! For if I don't take the next steamer home and get into a blue uniform, why—I'm a Dutchman!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Mrs. Dering's itinerary was subject to change, as Russell soon discovered; a half hour's study of the guide book, or a single question directed across the hotel table by some enthusiastic tourist who had already "done" the neighboring country, would be quite sufficient to detain her several days longer in one place or to start her off immediately in some new and wholly unforeseen direction. Their tickets had been purchased through to Cordova, but at the eleventh hour she decided that it would be a pity to pass Toledo without stopping; so the courier was sent on with their luggage while Russell and the two ladies turned aside for a day in that ancient city—where, had it not been for the goat's milk in her coffee, Mrs. Dering might have been content to linger for a week.

At Cordova, after the most energetic sightseeing, she became infatuated with Moorish architecture and urged a hasty visit to Granada; and, although it was but a short time since Russell's previous visit, he was well content to dream away four days of golden spring weather in the beautiful courts of the Alhambra. But one morning, at the breakfast table in the Hotel Washington Irving, a stout and prosperous individual of British parentage but of cosperous individual of Britis

mopolitan tastes assured this lady of uncertain movements that Malaga was much more worthy of her attention.

So to Malaga they journeyed, and—despite its beautiful situation, its azure skies and its sloe-eyed women—Mrs. Dering after one day pronounced it too up-to-date and commercial, and was filled with a sudden longing to see Cadiz and sleepy, sunny old Seville. Russell, meanwhile, had supplied himself with the latest newspapers and discovered that in the twelve days of his futile knight errantry the fever of resentment against American interference had to a great extent abated. Mrs. Dering said, "I told you so," and forthwith planned many excursions through the interior with so serene an air of independence that pride forbade his surrendering his knightly task until he had seen her out of Spanish territory.

With a speed that Rozinante might have rivaled, they continued on their way, pausing next at Ronda for a couple of days and then at Gaucin for a visit to the ancient castle and monastery; but on the evening of the twenty-first of March they crossed the bay from Algeciras to Gibraltar and arrived within the walls of that most impregnable of British fortresses.

It was at the Hotel Royal and in the identical room where, two months before, he had meditated on stray mermaids with wet, seagreen eyes that Russell, after supper, unfolded an English newspaper and perceived that the Hispano-American difficulty had retired from the head lines on the first page to an obscure place at the foot of an inside column.

Whereupon he abused himself for a quixotic fool and thought hard things of his friend Hal Thornton—as was very human and excusable!

Thirty-six hours later he bade farewell to Mrs. Dering—whose desires were still vacillating between Holy Week in Seville and Easter in Rome—and with a strange buoyancy of spirit turned his own face toward Madrid.

During the past two weeks of dalliance, of aimless wanderings, he had carried in his thoughts a triple cord: the broken thread of his novel—fluttering distressfully like the severed gossamer of a spider's web; the coarser strand of actualities that took its color partly from the Andalusian atmosphere, partly from Mrs. Dering; and a third filament -fine-spun, and strong as fate—that drew him ever backward. And now, with every mile the dilatory train achieved, he seemed to feel a greater tension. The double-faced clocks suspended before each of the long, low yellow-washed estaciones along the route mocked him with their inconsistencies; the hours seemed interminable. But at noon on the second day the train rumbled into the city, the guard cried "Madre-e-eth!" in a high pitched, nasal voice, and the door of his compartment was unlocked.

In the Calle Mayor, Ray was toiling up the long stairway with a flowery burden; she held in one hand a bouquet of white narcissus and her left arm clasped an immense pot of blooming pansies. The jar was heavy and the stairs were steep; half way up she sat her down to rest—and heard the swift,

light tread of a man ascending. A moment later,

Russell appeared on the landing just below.

As he looked up and saw the slim young figure with the mass of bloom on its knees, he felt a sudden tightening of that mysterious third filament; and the haunting thought, that had never left him since the afternoon of the riot, became conviction: this gray eyed girl on the stairs, whose sweet flushed face looked down upon him from over the flower-pot brimming with pansies, was the One Woman in all the world. For two months he had been studying her—a small bewitching bundle of femininity—with her thousand contradictions, her sudden flares, her meltings, her sincerities; she was neither over wise nor uncommonly beautiful, but very genuine and lovable; and today he remembered nothing save her nearness and her dearness. Up the intervening steps he bounded and offered her his hand.

Very calmly she extended hers. "Spring has come," she said.

"So have I!" he gently reminded her.

"And of course you are equally welcome," she returned with a disconcerting glance—for today the gray eyes were cool, shimmering, unfathomable. "How did you leave Mrs. Ward . . . and Mrs. Dering?"

He disposed of both in a few careless words; then, hearing other feet on the stairs mounting nearer and nearer, he asked, in the few seconds that remained to him, if she could spare him one of her pansies. It is probable that ninety nine men out of a hundred would have done the same. And the hundredth man, if more original, would have been less wise; for, as a general rule, women like to be petitioned for these small favors, so valueless except at their bestowing. And man divines it! Schoolboy or philosopher, peasant or prince, his tactics are very much the same—and have been so since the beginning of time: Adam must have pleaded for an apple blossom before he ever tasted of the tree; for some kinds of wisdom are inborn.

"Certainly," said Ray; and, presenting the jar, bade him help himself.

That was a disappointment; he would have preferred to receive it at her hands. The same jar afterwards adorned the lunch table; and as Peter's buttonhole was decorated, and Mr. Stafford's, and Mrs. Stafford's, and as Ray politely and urgently offered pansies to Don Antonio and Don Francisco, Russell could take little pleasure in his own. But

that disproves nothing whatsoever.

The Staffords had finally decided that it would be possible for them to carry out their original program of visiting Seville. There were no longer any immediate grounds for apprehension, as the United States had refrained from further championship of the Cuban cause and Spain had plainly shown her own desire for peace. Even when, in April, President Cleveland tendered the friendly offices of his Government for mediatorial purposes, the mother country's declination was as courteous as it was firm. Nevertheless, there remained always a consciousness

of subterranean fires; and our little colony of Americans felt constrained to keep a constant guard

upon their lips, their very gestures.

Once again, during the past fortnight, Ray had been seriously annoyed by the pertinacious attentions of the mysterious Teodoro; but she had made no mention of the incident lest Peter or Mr. Stafford should become involved for her sake in a dispute. The diminution of their party was a source of regret to her now; but there still remained Dolores, her guardian and adviser-in-chief, and Peter's comradeship was quite loyal enough to stand an additional strain.

The Monday after Russell's return was the beginning of Holy Week, and that night the Staffords took their departure. The two art students who remained behind had planned to spend the next day sketching on the banks of the Manzanares, just without the city limits.

"If we carry our lunch with us we can stay till sundown," Peter said. "That will give us time to paint two studies apiece. And I'll tell you what,

Miss Ray, we can invite Russell to go along."

"Oh, no!" she cried.

"But why not? It would be downright shabby not to ask him, and he's first rate company . . . What's that? we haven't got a chaperon? Great Scott! who wants a chaperon with five thousand washerwomen looking on?"

"Very well, Peter; you may ask him if you like-

he would never dream of accepting."

But he did. His work had suddenly lost all its savor; his very soul revolted at the thought of musty old histories, of dry-as-dust records, of dead and gone romances, conflicts and intrigues; he hated the puppets his imagination had created; he was no longer moved by their hypothetical woes. Day after day he had thrown down his pen in despair and hurried forth to seek, in the outer sunshine and amid the living faces on the street, the one countenance that perpetually obtruded itself between him and the unwritten page. In this mood Peter's invitation found him, and immediately he locked his desk. His hero's wooing must give precedence to his own!

A spirit of joyous vagabondage possessed the three of them as they started out next morning, with the portero's grandson—a jovial, brownfaced urchin of some ten or eleven summers—trudging in their wake, armed with Ray's folding easel and the lunch basket.

Out of the Calle Mayor with its bustle of business and rattling cabs; criss-cross through a grassy square near the massive foundations of the sometime-to-be cathedral; close by the Royal Palace, a long, low, sumptuous pile gleaming like ivory in the early sunshine; northward then, in the rear of the walled-in, beautiful gardens of the Campo del Moro—where his frail little majesty, Alphonso XIII, enjoyed his daily canter on "el jaca gray;" for a good half mile along the Camino del Pardo that parallels the watercourse; past the hermita of San Antonio—blessed patron of lovers and of quadru-

peds; loitering, hurrying—just as it pleased them—wandered the four. And not the least happy was Tonito, who served them always with a devotion born of periodical *fritulas* from the spice-breathing hot-cake stand just over the way from Dolores door, and who had visions now of a whole pocketful of "perrachicas" to be invested there on his return.

It was a day to be marked on the calendar with sapphires and diamonds, such a day as comes but once in all the year—when Spring, the shy stranger, first lifts her head and smiles! Behind them, the city; on their right, a stretch of gray green woods shot through with sunbeams—like a landscape by Corot; before them on the far horizon, the Guadarrama range still tipped with silver; on their left, the shallow Manzanares—also some five thousand washerwomen (by Peter's count) and the drying linen of Madrid.

Clothes lines, an unbroken web of them, extend for nearly a mile along either bank of the river. On Sundays they are always empty and the bare crooked poles stand up forlorn, a leafless thicket. Then, the river appears deserted; it babbles with all its shallow might as it trickles over the stones, wondering to itself, no doubt, at the unwonted stillness in the air. But on Monday morning, bright and early, come the lavanderas from their cabins in the rear, come the children clinging to their mothers' skirts, come the husbands back from their usual rounds with great bundles for the wash, come the little gray donkeys, too, with only their long ears visible between the huge white bags of linen swung

across their patient shoulders. And soon the transparent ripples are afoam, the air is filled with a cheerful chatter and the forest of bare poles begins to blossom. This was Tuesday, and—flip! flap! flutter!—the sheets of the city were waving in the breeze.

Kneeling in their little wooden cajones on the very brink of the icy cold stream—that has its source in the melting snows of the mountains—with sleeves uprolled and bare red arms immersed to the elbow, the lavanderas splashed and scrubbed. In their unending labor they must often endure bleak winds and burning suns, aching knees and blistered arms; but still the laugh rings out with hearty humor and the gossip, jest and jibe are never failing.

"I wonder—" said Ray musingly, as she and Russell lingered on the rustic footbridge that spanned the narrow water course, "I wonder if they are as contented as they seem—if they have no ambitions either for themselves or for their children! Now, in America the mother of a pretty girl like that one

over yonder—"

"Would be making a regrettable vacancy for the benefit of Ah Sin Lee!" and her companion lazily smiled; sociological problems had no interest for him just then, he was far too busy trying to detect some difference between her manner to him and her frank intercourse with young Harding. Since his return he had become resentfully aware of a subtle change in her—a cool and friendly composure, a bright unfathomable calm. He would give worlds, he thought, to see it shattered only once! But here

Peter, like a cheerful cyclone, hurried them across; sketching easels were set up on the bank, color boxes were unstrapped and the artists fell to work with zestful industry.

The shyness of the genial river folk was soon mastered by their curiosity; they began to venture near the easels and to rally their companions gaily as they recognized the red kerchief of Luisa, or the blue gown of Pepita, scrubbing away at the water's edge encircled by waves of foam. And then Pepita must needs wipe her soapy hands and climb the bank to peer over the artist's shoulders and exclaim aloud in soft wonderment. For, Holy Saint Anthony! the señorito had set down every rag of Josefa's wash—but the sheets were not so clean as they should be! Indeed, no; if the señor would trouble himself to look again he would surely perceive it!

By dint of many questions it was discovered that the strangers were from over seas, and had come all this journey for the sake of Murillo and Velazquez—both names to conjure with, for the art treasures of Spain are the heritage of rich and poor alike. So now, in the pride and hospitality of their hearts, they offered to the pilgrim guests all the small courtesies they could devise; and growing more familiar as the hours wore away, they ventured at last on some rather rough and disconcerting

pleasantries.

What did Pepita suppose was the relationship between the little señorita and the two so very tall señores? Was she sister to either of them? No? Then she must be wife or *novia* to one. Josefa

thought it must be the caballero who sat there so patiently with the book which he did not read. Was it so? No, again! only amigos, all three of them? Puf! Luisa knew better than to believe that. So pretty a señorita and so handsome a caballero, they would be marrying each other before the year was out! . . And a ripple of laughter ran down

the stream as the jest passed on.

Russell lowered his book and gazed fixedly at Ray, who was painting busily, concentratedly. She had turned a deaf—an apparently oblivious ear while Peter alone responded to the mischievous fire of questions; but a few minutes later, when pausing to replenish the colors on her palette, she threw a furtive glance at the silent figure further up the bank. There was a shock of meeting eyes, her own fell swiftly, and a wave of vivid crimson dyed her throat and cheek and brow; whereupon Russell, with a thrill of satisfaction, turned over three or four pages at once.

CHAPTER XIX

EASTER MONDAY.

My Dear Louise:-

It is well, perhaps, that we have no prescience of the happenings that derange our plans, or we would never venture to lay any. All of ours seem to have "gane agley" since I wrote you last. Tomorrow the Staffords were to have returned, and the regular routine of our work—which has been somewhat broken by their absence—would have been taken up again. Tonight, however, I find myself alone under the señora's wing while Peter is steaming, as fast as a Spanish locomotive can take him, down to Seville where Mr. Stafford lies sick, probably from overwork and overworry.

This afternoon, just as Dolores, Mr. Russell, Peter and I were about starting for the Plaza de Toros, where I was to have witnessed my first bull fight, a telegram arrived from Mrs. Stafford: We cannot leave for my husband is very ill. It was addressed to Peter, who read it quietly and handed it on to me saying: "I must go to them by the next train. Poor little woman, she must be at her wit's end!" And with that he went straight to his room and began packing.

It was only what I should have expected of Peter. Whenever there is a disagreeable task to be performed, he doesn't look around to see who else can be got to do it, he just does it himself, promptly and effectually. In spite of his boyishness and fun, it is to Peter that we look in emergencies, and he is generally equal to the occasion. I begin to feel that I have never really appreciated him. He is a friend worth having anywhere, loyal and trustworthy; but when one is far away in a foreign country he represents just six-feet-two of solid comfort. I shall miss him terribly, but I know how Mrs. Stafford's pale, pathetic face will glow with gratitude when he marches into the sick room and takes possession.

At first I wanted to go too. However, under all the circumstances, Peter thought it inadvisable, it was better to save the extra passage money for doctor's bills and medicine. We are afraid the Staf-

fords' funds are very low.

Mr. Russell was exceedingly kind, he offered in the nicest possible way to act as Mr. Stafford's banker; but Peter wouldn't hear of it. "Oh, that's all right," he said, and rammed both hands in his pockets. I was so glad he felt that way, for although Mr. Russell is almost like one of us, he isn't quite. I don't imagine he's a very wealthy man, but he seems to have as much money as he needs for the gratification of all his tastes, and the one feature of bohemianism that I do approve has probably never come to his attention—I mean what Peter calls "pooling our incomes." There is a sort of family tie between impecunious artists, — you understand,

Louise,—if Peter or I were ever to be ill, the Staffords would do for us like a real brother and sister; so now we don't care to call in an outsider's aid. If this illness proves very serious, I dare say Mr. Russell will renew his offer to Mrs. Stafford; that would be different—and Mr. Stafford has already completed several of the illustrations he was engaged to do. For the present, though, I think we shall manage very nicely. I'm so glad I didn't buy that Moorish stuff-and my new spring things won't cost me much, for the dressmaker who lives on our attic floor does beautiful work and her charges are ridiculously small. One of her seamstresses has a sweetheart among the soldiers who were sent in February to Cuba, and last week, when I was being fitted, the poor girl's eyes were swollen with weeping-she had just seen his name in the list of wounded. There is so much trouble in the world!

I have been making myself a little parable from my two names, which suggest the contradictory tendencies of my nature—my Hyde and Jekyll roles. Whatever etymologists may say, Ray and Raven both mean Wanderer. But, while the dark messenger went to and fro, aimlessly, forgetfully, the bright one takes a straight flight through the void, holding fast through all its course the secrets it was charged with, fulfilling its mission when the goal is reached. I wish I had been christened Ray instead of Raven; I'm not often superstitious, but tonight the illomened significance of my given name is haunting me.

I suppose I am homesick; I ought not to let you know it, but I can't help myself. Am I as dear to you, I wonder, as I used to be in the days when the one name "Twins" used to do for us both? Of course, I can't expect now to have the first place in your heart; but it is the *same* place, isn't it? You have but builded on new and wider chambers for the new loves in your life? It would be so—I think—with me.

Yesterday was Easter Sunday. I went alone to the English chapel; it seemed forlorn, without a single flower, when outside

"One looked to see the very street Grow purple at one's feet."

There were only seven people in the congregation. Mr. Russell was among them, he must have come in after I did, for I didn't see him till the service was over; but he waited at the door for me and we walked home together.

It was unmistakably a gala day. We both noticed the stir, the suppressed excitement among the crowds on the pavement: the very air was vibrating with the word torero. A strange people are the Spaniards, and their religion is to me the strangest part of them. It is medieval in its superstition and barbarous in its expression, but at all times it is intensely social. To a superficial observer this past week, the mood of the people has been precisely the same, whether they were making the round of the churches on Holy Thursday, witnessing the Good Friday pageant with its ghastly graven images, its priestly

and military escort, or driving to the Circus on Easter Sunday or Monday to see the biggest bull fights of the year. Social functions, all of them, differentiated only by this trifling detail: during the first two days every lady appeared in a black mantilla; during the last two, she exchanged it for a white one.

Mr. Russell seemed to think that a foreigner might be equally struck by the unholy holidays at home; but when I discovered an analogy between our Thanksgiving football and the Easter bull fight, he rather resented it. I wasn't surprised. It is only the women who have wept—like you, Louise,—over the wreck of a Grecian nose that find anything barbarous in football.

I ascertained—with much difficulty, for he is a modest man—that Mr. Russell had once played half back on a Harvard team, escaping, providentially, with only a broken collar bone and a few sprains and bruises. He was telling me something of his college days as we came from church, and he related a very pleasant anecdote of Mr. Thornton—too long for repetition here. "In my father's and grandfather's time," he went on, "there was a very close friend-ship between the Russells and the Thorntons, which—unlike most hereditary intimacies—has survived in the third generation." I wondered to myself how far that was due to Mrs. Dering. He was about to speak of her, I think, when we found ourselves at the señora's door.

Since the Staffords left we have seen a great deal of Mr. Russell,—as is only natural in a small circle

like ours. Don Francisco is off on a month's leave; Don Antonio plays chess every night at the Café Suizo and, when at home, is always closeted with visitors—grayhaired, mysterious, official-looking persons, who may come to discuss affairs of state or only our friend's Madeira and cigars. But we Americans have spent our evenings with the señora in the comedor, poring over a heap of Spanish books and papers, from which Mr. Russell often read aloud, translating constantly for Peter's benefit, while from time to time Dolores threw in an illuminating word or capped some story with a clever anecdote told in her bright dramatic way.

I can't leave Madrid without a portrait of her—that is, if I can persuade her to sit to me. Perhaps I

may be able to manage it while Peter is away.

The prospect of working alone in the gallery is not enjoyable; for my bête noire, the man who calls himself Teodoro, is very often to be encountered there. I dislike exceedingly having to snub people, and when I administer my very worst without effect, it makes my angry passions rise. Moreover, it puts

me in a false position. For instance:

On the afternoon of Holy Thursday, Peter and I were coming home from the studio when we encountered a most remarkable crowd. Carriages or vehicles of any kind are not permitted on the streets during Thursday and Friday of Holy Week, but the Spaniards have adroitly converted what would have been a deprivation into a social opportunity: since even the Queen must go afoot, it becomes the most desirable thing to do. You know how an afternoon

tea—in the springtime when the windows are open becomes audible nearly a block away? Well, imagine all the teas of your experience united in one, and you will form some idea of the sounds that filled the Alcalá and the Puerta del Sol from four o'clock until twilight. Two streams of people, all in their best attire, were coming and going; but although they constantly mingled, there was no crowding and no haste. Peter and I, each holding a sheaf of paint brushes, easily made our way through the murmuring current. On all sides of us, caballeros were throwing themselves metaphorically at the feet of their fair acquaintances, and mantillas were responding gracefully to the greetings of sombreros. What a fascination lurks in a mantilla and a rose! In my simple straw hat, although it is new and not unbecoming, I felt so unromantic, so inartistic! By its aid, however, Mr. Russell recognized me and joined us. It was strange to see so few familiar faces in all that throng. Señor de Tolosa and his wife paused a moment to inquire after my health, and I exchanged a bow with one of the ladies I had met at their house on the afternoon of the riot; then I supposed I had exhausted my small circle. But presently Mr. Russell said, "There on your left, Miss Woodward, is an acquaintance who is very eager to be recognized."

I looked up and met the eyes of my bête noire, insolently familiar. "He's no acquaintance of mine!" I cried impulsively—too late perceiving that the foremost gentleman was Don Enrique de Silvela. I bowed then in haste, and he responded gallantly. At

the same instant, that wretched Teodoro doffed his hat again, exclaiming with cool audacity: "Forever

your slave, Reina mia!"

I heard Peter's Hello! and I felt Mr. Russell's scrutiny. Had I been a man, I would have indulged in a little profanity; being a woman, of course I blushed. Then, before I could utter a word of explanation, Mr. Russell began to talk quietly of the strange ceremony of the morning, to which he had been fortunate enough to gain admittance, in which the Queen herself washes the feet of a dozen beggars. But I was quite incapable of listening.

I so detest anything clandestine; there's not an atom of the intriguante in my nature; in fact, as you are aware, I'm the most transparent person alive: consequently, this little episode has been excessively annoying. One never knows just what Mr. Russell thinks; he's so reticent, so—so Northern! altogether different from Peter, who is delightfully comprehensible and quite Southern in his spontaneity! . . .

About midnight on this same Monday, the writer of the foregoing letter was the subject of another conversation between the two Silvelas in the Café Fornos, a conversation begun by Don Enrique in a spirit of goodhumored railery and ending, as not infrequently happened, in a temporary rupture between the cousins. The captain's other friends never ceased to wonder that the mere tie of kinship could bridge over the vast difference in the tastes and habits of these two men, and they were unanimously of the opinion that nothing but the kindly generosity

of Enrique's nature made it possible. The other's disposition was moody in the extreme; and beneath his overweening vanity, his reckless cynicism, his vacillating passions, lurked a vein of cold brutality and a most unexpected shrewdness. He had many intimates but, with the one exception of his cousin Enrique, apparently no friends. Sometimes it happens, though, that a man who has betrayed himself to his own sex as utterly selfish and unscrupulous, not to be counted on either in his likings or in his hates, may yet compel the faith, the devotion, the unswerving loyalty of some woman more weak than vicious, who becomes first his plaything and then his tool: such a man was Teodoro de Silvela. And the real cause of Enrique's long-suffering friendship was intense family pride. For the sake of the old name surviving only in Teodoro and himself, for the honor of an ancient house now all but extinct, the young captain held fast to what little influence he still possessed over his cousin, exhibiting an apparent tolerance for the other's vices which he was very far from feeling.

On this Easter Monday night his patience was unusually tried, for his companion had lost about one fifth of his year's income at the bull fight that afternoon. Gambling was Teodoro's grand passion; the chances of the lottery, of the arena and the cock pit, or of trente et quarente at the Casino, fascinated him far more than the smiles of any woman. But his disposition was such that he could ill brook defeat of any kind; and when Enrique, with less than his usual tact, ventured on a jesting allusion to their

wager and the probable ownership of the two lottery tickets in Francisco's keeping, it proved too much for his cousin's irritable temper. He hotly disclaimed

having yet made any efforts in that quarter.

"In fact," he declared, "as I suspected from the first, the girl is not worth the trouble. She is no beauty, to begin with—neither blanca nor morena. I have no fancy for the nondescript coloring of the typical American; a woman's hair should be black or golden, her eyes blue as heaven or dark as night. I could love a fair devil or a swarthy angel—or vice versa; but a pale prude is not at all to my taste. Moreover, there is not even one rival in the field—and a woman without lovers is as tempting as a dinner without wine!"

"Unless I am much mistaken," said the captain, "you do her an injustice; for—even if she has left no admirers in her own country—there is, in Madrid, at least *one* man in love with her gray eyes."

"Quita! if you mean Francisco,—but where is that young provincial hiding himself? I haven't seen

him for a week."

"Down in his native groves, I suppose. He has been granted a month's furlough—doubtless in consideration of the fact that he goes in June to Cuba. But it was not to him that I referred; he is hardly capable of a serious affair. The lover I suspect is a fellow countryman of the señorita—one Meestair Rosail."

"If I could be convinced of that—" mused Teodoro, "it would be extremely diverting to thwart

him."

Enrique stared dubiously at his empty wineglass. "Be advised, and refrain from the attempt; you will only fail, and perhaps give serious annoyance to the little American. That wager was discreditable to both of us; let us make an end of it at once. You will be no nearer success a month hence than you are now, so the tickets clearly belong to me; but I am willing to relinquish yours tonight for its cost price—twenty five duros."

"You are liberal," sneered the other, "if I cared to purchase a lottery ticket, I could do so at the next

street corner."

Don Enrique flushed deeply, but with a strong effort controlled himself. "Keep your money, cousin, and welcome! I am not scheming to take advantage of you. For the sake of the little señorita, whom I have had the honor to meet, I ask you to accept the ticket as a free gift."

Teodoro pushed back his chair with an oath.

"--- you!" he cried, "I would rather lose it!"

CHAPTER XX

At thirty-three a man very seldom makes love; if he is thoroughly in earnest, love is making him. The miracle that is being worked in himself, the readjustment of his whole scheme of existence, absorb him utterly. He bestows no thought on the little arts and wiles practiced by lovers in their first and second youth—that is to say, in unripeness and a too, too mellow age; a certain self esteem, that belongs of right to maturity, forbids such trifling. He is content to rest his claim upon what he really is, and upon what-by virtue of an honest affection —he hopes to become. He has, moreover, an instinctive faith in the ability of the right woman to recognize in him the right man: her failure to do so would be incontestable evidence that she was not the right woman!

Such was Eliot Russell's position during the first days following Peter's departure. Stranded as were Ray and himself on a foreign shore, isolated amid a crowd and wrapped in the privacy of a common speech unintelligible to those around, the bond between them strengthened hourly. Their very isolation, however, laid a check upon Russell's lips; partly because he was one who could enjoy the peculiar charm of the situation, but chiefly because Ray's

very dependence made him unwilling to force any change in their relations. Until one or all of her friends returned, he felt in honor bound to act only a friend's part, and if the duties imposed upon friendship by his present code were somewhat more than common, who could wonder at it? It never occurred to him to consider the opinions of the Spaniards in the house-what Dolores thought, what Don Antonio suspected, what Benita saw. He never dreamed that the progress of his love affair was the daily topic in the kitchen, that the very pots on the range were tingling with romance! Although the little maid hovered about them like a beneficent Cupid and the air with which she changed their plates was in itself a benediction, he was blind to it a11.

Not so was Ray. Benita's wreathed smiles and significant glances woke many a blush of which Russell cherished the remembrance. Dolores was the soul of discretion, Don Antonio rallied her only in the American's absence, but Benita was an ever present source of torture. Some comfort she took in Francisco's extended furlough, for she could easily conceive how much his simulated jealousy, his reproachful despair, might add to the awkwardness of the situation. Indeed, it was more than awkward: this atmosphere surcharged with sentiment was offensive to her American maidenhood. For while, in her creed, love was the consummation of good comradeship, the latter did not invariably lead to love.

It was significant of the respect in which Russell was held that he was spared similar cause for annoyance. On one occasion Don Antonio did venture to remark to him, privately, that heaven had endowed the señorita with a beautiful soul; to which he had assented with such imperturbability and so little enthusiasm that the Spaniard had immediately dropped the subject.

Toward the end of the week came a letter from Peter which Russell petitioned to see, and its trenchant naiveté was so characteristic of the writer that

he smiled broadly as he read it.

"Dear Miss Ray," wrote the boy in his big bold hand, "it's hot as blazes down here and Stafford's got a sharp attack of fever. He's been working like a crazy genius and I wonder he's not dead. Luckily, there's a doctor stopping in the hotel with us, a capital fellow-English, but quite decent enough for an American. Has a mother and sister with him. Her name's Gladys-I mean the sister's - and she's as pretty as pink shoes. Who else do you suppose are in Seville? Mrs. Dering and her aunt. The Hazeldeans persuaded them to give up the Italian trip and spend Easter here instead. I don't think the Doctor's advice was disinterested—he seems quite smitten with Mrs. D. How are you getting along? I appointed Russell my deputy; so if you need the services of a man and a brother, call on him. Please forward our mail promptly. Stafford's wild for news of his Salon picture. He did some stunning work last week and you can tell Russell I say so. I'll report the patient in occasional bulletins, but don't

look for another long letter like this for it takes too much time to write. And don't Imagine I'm at all gone on Miss Gladys Hazeldean—she hasn't a parti-

cle of style."

"Then his 'swell' ideal is in danger." laughed Russell, returning the sheet. "For evidently that afterthought was the suggestion of a guilty conscience. But I'm his debtor for the deputyship. Don't let it be a sinecure, Miss Woodward."

"I was afraid you'd found it anything but!"

"On the contrary, I never can discover enough to do!"

This admission was of an artfulness, but it called forth no response; a serenely indifferent glance from the gray eyes implied that *she* had no time to be devising devoirs for the proving of witless knights, and Russell promptly registered an oath of stricter service.

That afternoon, starting out to join her at the Museum, he was amusedly conscious of his own alacrity, and wonder seized him afresh that he should have gone scot free for three and thirty years only to surrender at last to a slip of perversity like Ray. From recent experiences, he could predict to a degree the temperature of her cool little welcome, he could picture the uplift of her penciled brows, her engaging air of wonder at his punctual appearance. But if he should venture to inspect her work, to criticise and make suggestions, how she would flare up at once in defense of it, disdaining his opinions and supporting her own with heated argument till his avowal of defeat should give the signal for her magnanimous

surrender. Then a new battle would begin, in which each would strive to outdo the other in recantation, and he should have to restrain her forcibly from putting into effect all the unnecessary touches and alterations that he had been artfully suggesting. This pleasing pastime would continue until the sharp ringing of a gong announced the hour for closing the gallery; and, though it meant the loss to her of a good thirty minutes' work, he felt not the least compunction,—for didn't he owe many an unproductive morning to her spirit presence at his desk?

To compute the exact limits of his proximate encroachment, he drew out his watch and was dismayed to find that it had stopped at a quarter after three. As the treacherous hands had told the same story when he last consulted them, he began to fear that he was later than usual; but when the mellow bells of a distant church tower chimed for four o'clock, he was utterly chagrined. Ray would despise him for a laggard—and on this of all days, when he had just vowed to be more punctilious in

his attendance!

Pressing forward with redoubled haste, he perceived, coming down the street toward him,a willowy girl in a winged straw hat and a trim fitting dove-colored gown (that, on its first appearance at breakfast that morning, had greatly taken his fancy) and beside her, the dapper figure of a man—a fellow with a carnation in his buttonhole, silk hatted and flourishing a cane! Of course neither the tile, the cane nor the carnation were reprehensible in themselves; but the angle of a hat brim, the size and color

of a flower, the gyrations of a fool's bauble, may make—thought Russell—an insufferable difference! What angered him most, however, was the scared look in Ray's eyes as she recognized him—for he was wholly unconscious of the savage light in his own. On the other man's face was a jaunty defiance; clearly, he was congratulating himself on filling a coveted position.

Something in their several expressions had roused the curiosity of passers-by, who glanced back over their shoulders at the meeting of the three; but if they had anticipated anything like a scene, they were disappointed, for Ray forestalled it with a

prompt introduction.

"Caballeros, let me make you acquainted! Don—Don Teodoro, Mr. Russell," and her voice broke suddenly in a weak little laugh. "I thought you weren't coming," she added in English. "The gallery has closed."

Silvela had acknowledged the presentation by a mocking salute—he was profoundly honored by the caballero's acquaintance! But the caballero himself appeared to feel otherwise; he stared wordlessly at them both, lifted his hat with a frigid bow and passed on—blind to the white dejection and the insolent triumph he left behind him.

There is probably nothing that a man—or an Anglo-Saxon, at least—finds harder to forgive in the woman he loves than a lack of truth. Small feminine concealments and prevarications may be condoned by duenna-ridden nations and that oriental

skepticism which has never admitted the moral equality of the sexes; but the chief pride of the Anglo-Saxon woman is the admixture of comradeship with the love she inspires, and woe unto her who forgets that its basis is absolute truth!—"I would have a woman as true as Death," wrote a famous American some fifty years ago, and the words will always find an echo wherever the English tongue is heard. "At the first real lie which works from the heart outward, she should be tenderly chloroformed into a better world," for her mission in this is a failure.

Some such thought as this dogged Russell as he wandered on. What he demanded of a woman, first of all, was not that she should be very wise, but that she should be utterly true. And if Ray had been concealing all these months an intimacy of which she was ashamed, an intimacy of which even Peter appeared ignorant and which accident, only, had now betrayed, then—he was disappointed in her! It was not the mere fact that she had been permitting the Spaniard's attentions, he could find a thousand excuses for that in her youth and inexperience; but that she had recently, in plain words, denied the acquaintance was absolutely unpardonable. And her forced laugh, her little air of bravado just now, as she went through the introduction had positively made him ill!

He walked the streets for hours in a state of wretched disillusionment; and that night, when they met at the dinner table, his pale stern face was a mute reproach. For the first few minutes her eyes sought his again and again with a look in which pride, guilt and penitence were strangely blended; but as the interminable meal dragged on, only the pride survived, and finally she ignored him altogether, giving her whole attention to Don Antonio. Russell took no part in the conversation; and as soon as decency permitted, he rose and left the room. But the stress and tumult of his thoughts drove him from the house again, and out in the ill lighted streets he drifted miserably; before him—a fading beacon—was that ideal woman who had always been above suspicion; and tugging heavily at his heart, like a dragging anchor, was a love that was dying hard!

CHAPTER XXI

"Qué fastidioso
es mi Manuelo!
yo no puedo mirar
á otro caballero;
yo no puedo pasar
sin el abanico;
qué fastidioso
es Manuelito!"

It was Saturday morning; Benita was down on her knees in the kitchen, cleaning out the week's ashes from the old brick range and singing, as she worked, at the top of a lusty young voice. All the doors and windows were open, and the jubilant treble penetrated to the uttermost recesses of the flat; in the rear hall, where Ray was setting up her easel, the echoes were deafening, so when a sudden change of posture robbed the singer of breath, her listener drew a sigh of relief. The blessed lull that followed was sweetly punctuated by low twitterings from the wicker cages in the window.

Michito, the frivolous kitten, came sidling down the hall and made coquettish advances to the grave eyed girl at the easel; but receiving no encouragement, retired in a huff to the seclusion of the señora's work-basket, whence he glowered greenly on an unappreciative world. But Ray, all unconscious of his impotent wrath, gazed absently at a vacant armchair pushed back against the creamy plastered wall with the light from one small window falling obliquely over it. There—her fine old face in semi-shadow—Dolores had posed for her yesterday morning, and another sitting had been promised for today, when the Saturday marketing was done. The clock in the comedor was now striking ten, so the young artist filled her palette, ranged her brushes and waited

patiently for the señora's home coming.

She considered herself wonderfully fortunate in having so willing and beautiful a model under the same roof, for without Peter she would never go back to the Museum-Mr. Russell's reluctant escort being now quite as undesirable as Teodoro's pursuit. Teodoro! What a detestable name it was! Theodore had always been rather pleasing to her because of its significance, its sonorous dignity; but the suppression of the h, the flatting of the first vowel and the reiteration of the second, robbed it of all virilityby no other appellation could a man be quite so odious! And to think that Mr. Russell should believe -as he so evidently did-that she had given him encouragement! Of course, the introduction had been a mistake on her part; but the Spaniard had had the insolence to declare that no "caballero yankee" could force him to retire, and so she had chosen what seemed to her the most tactful and womanly course. Ever since Mr. Russell's warning to her, on the evening of the riot, she had endured the Spaniard's pursuit without complaint, trusting only in her own wit and her maidenly dignity to protect her from his insolent attentions. Peter, she knew, would have been quick to resent them for her, and she had believed that Mr. Russell—as Peter's deputy!-would have felt the same, had she given him an inkling of the truth. But if she had, and the Spaniard had insulted him, or even-for Teodoro had a thoroughly bad face, an assassin's face! (and she shuddered)—if anything serious had happened, and she to blame for it, how could she ever have forgiven herself? Mr. Russell had said, too, that the-the maltreatment of an American might have serious consequences at a time like this, and she had felt the responsibilities of her citizenship weigh heavily upon her. It was very hard now to be so entirely misunderstood! She wondered how a more sophisticated woman would have acted-Mrs. Dering, for instance. Ah! but in no case would Mr. Russell have abandoned her to such dubious esquireship; instinct would have assured him that she found it objectionable. But an art student's tastes were not supposed to be so nice! imputation left her sore.

> "Si ya tu quieres ser mi marido, lo que me dices mira bien!"

Evidently, the little maid had recovered her breath; she was now sweeping the kitchen floor, and her song was shrilled out in time to the strokes of her broom.

"Lo que me dices, hombre querido, mira bien ó quita, per Dio'!" The piercing strains, with their innumerable turns and quavers, continued incessantly for the next five minutes, distracting the ear like the loud skirling of a bag pipe; all lesser sounds became inaudible, and Ray heard neither the click of a latch key in the outer door nor the subsequent murmur of two low pitched voices on the other side of the yellow portières.

It was not the marketing that had detained the careful housemother; for although she had chaffered many minutes over a pair of fat squabs with which she fondly hoped to tempt capricious appetites, it was not more than half past nine when Russell overtook her on the stairs. He lifted his hat with grave courtesy and tendered his assistance, but she smilingly waved him aside.

"Not yet, señor mio; I have still no need of that—the saints be praised!" She drew up her shapely figure to its full height, which was very little short of his own. "I have climbed these steps for thirty years, but my heart is as sound and my muscles far firmer than when I first trod them as a woman newly wed. Moreover, señor, you may take my word for it, old eyes often see clearer than young ones!" To this speech her companion made no response, so they finished the ascent in silence. On the upper landing, however, Dolores paused, regarded him steadfastly and exclaimed: "Señor Rosail, will you let me say a word to you out here?"

"I am at your service," was the somewhat grim reply, and for a moment the old Spanishwoman hesitated; she was about to broach a subject of the utmost delicacy and the forbidding front of her listener made it very difficult to proceed. Then, all at once, she seemed touched by a finer dignity, and a curious tenderness softened her face; she had lost sight of the man before her—who was so very different from her José—and was thinking only of what she could do to secure the happiness of the young

girl who called her mother.

Suppose anything had happened, more than thirty years ago, to make mischief between herself and José! She might perhaps have loved again and married—some one else, but it would all have been sadly different; there was nothing in life so perfect as a first love wedded! . . . During these last few weeks she had seen—what she had seen. And now here were two young people, whom Heaven surely intended for each other, drifting apart for the want of a little word of explanation. Who could speak it if not she?

No encouragement was to be had from Russell. As he waited there on the dim landing, latch key in hand, his clean shaven lips were firmly shut and between his level brows was a heavy wrinkle. Few persons could have held him there a moment after Ray's name was mentioned; but this dignified señora with her widow's veil folded mantilla-wise over her silver hair, was not to be treated cavalierly. Dolores had an intuition of this—for no woman with any pretensions to charm can attain the age of sixty without discovering how far she may count on her personality to carry her through a difficult situation. With a tact that was as transparent as it was delicate,

she avoided all comment on the relations, past or present, between her two American guests, and spoke only of her own intercourse with Ray, describing with gentle pathos and in picturesque idiom the storming of her own old heart by "the muchachita with gray eyes." She allowed him to perceive how, from the first, she had been the proud repository of the señorita's confidences, which she unblushingly proceeded to betray-for by this time she was convinced of her hearer's sympathy. The latch key had returned to Russell's pocket, the wrinkle had smoothed itself out of his forehead; he interrupted her once or twice with a brief question, followed by an impatient, "Go on-I understand!" and Dolores made good use of his permission. With her serious face illumined, her language and gestures growing more and more dramatic, she gave him the whole history of the mysterious Teodoro—for whom she plainly entertained the most profound contemptand explained how the señorita had endured his pursuit in silent embarrassment rather than make herself a cause of contention between her American friends and any pillo malvado!

The effect of this revelation puzzled her at first, her companion listened with such grave intentness.

"And the other afternoon—" he asked.

Dolores hesitated. "If I tell you all, caballero, you

will do nothing rash to distress the señorita?"

"To distress her!" echoed Russell, a warm wonder dawning in his eyes. "Certainly not. I give you my word of honor."

Then, having arrived at the climax of her story, she told impressively of the Spaniard's joining Ray at the Museum, that being "a privilege she allowed to other caballeros," of his walking beside her in thick skinned indifference to snubs, of his final threat of dire vengeance against any "caballero yankee" who should presume to interfere with him, and of Ray's desperate expedient to avert an unpleasant scene and

its possible consequences.

The masculine mind is proverbially unskillful in fathoming the uttermost depths of a woman's motive; but Russell, in a plunge of blind bewilderment, grasped one blissful thought over which he gloated like a diver with his first found pearl: Ray's chief fear that afternoon had been for the possible consequences to himself! He understood now the break in her soft voice, the bravado of her smile, and although immeasurably provoked with her for paying heed to the Spaniard's futile threat, he found her diplomacy adorable since it was assumed for his sake and not her own.

The glow of his new content had irradiated the dark stairway and the dingy plastered walls had given place to vistas of a delectable future when he grew aware that the señora was studying him with shrewd bright eyes; immediately his forehead became suffused, he fumbled hastily for his latch key, pushed open the heavy door and was greeted on the threshold by Benita's jubilant treble.

Possibly, the words of the foolish little song may have suggested an idea to Dolores, or perhaps she was unaware of the full measure of her success; for as they entered the comedor she laid a detaining hand on Russell's arm. Did the señor understand why she had made this explanation?—He thought so.—Then what did he intend to do?

The point blank question took him aback, somewhat. Hitherto, he had accepted her interference in a spirit of vague and unconfessed gratitude; now it struck him that she was needlessly pertinacious: what he should do next was entirely his own affair! So, withdrawing himself from her grasp, he replied

discouragingly: "Nothing at all, señora."

San Antonio hear him!—and the old Spanish-woman became visibly indignant. Did the señor expect a trouble of this kind to heal itself? For nearly two days he had held himself aloof in frozen and offended silence. Did he think the child had not seen it? did he suppose he had only to smile forgiveness when it suited him? what did he imagine a woman was made of? There was but one way now to heal the breach, and that was to go at once, this very day, and say to her, "Consolation of my soul, if I have doubted thee for a moment it was because of the infinitude of my love." Behold me at thy feet!"

Russell winced. He had nothing in common with the Spanish temperament, and to him the words, the tone, the pose suggested were all most unpleasantly melodramatic. Moreover, he very naturally resented her appointing the time for him to speak; for to conceal the day and the hour is the instinct of all lovers. As he stood there with one hand on the knob of his chamber door, he rebelled against his enforced contact, his involuntary intimacy with the other inmates of this bourgeois household—his utter lack of all real privacy! When he *did* speak to Ray, must it be under the very eye of Dolores and within hearing of the kitchen maid's ear-splitting song—the words of which were so brutally apposite?

"Si ya tu quieres ser mi marido lo que me dices mira bien!

lo que me dices, hombre querido, mira bien ó quita—"

"Really, señora, I appreciate your kind intention"—his irritated voice belied the words—"but I don't think you understand either Miss Woodward or

myself."

"Dios mio!" cried Dolores wrathfully, "I understand this much, that the heart of la pobrecita is desolated!"

If he could have found a fit response, there was no time in which to make it; for a chair scraped noisily on the tiled floor of the passage and with a flurry of skirts, a low, shocked cry of "Señora! señora!" Ray herself appeared in the doorway. There was something so tragic in her rigid pose, in the spread of her young arms, in the tense clutch of her slim fingers dragging back the faded portières, something so condemnatory in the flash of the gray eyes that Dolores—who had started forward with one hand outstretched to forbid the unmaidenly intrusion—paused abruptly. Her arm dropped weakly to her side, and a swift breaking up of the lines in her strong old face, a pathetic shrinking of the tall figure, betrayed her instant recollection that this child was not bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, to be judged by the light of her own traditions.

"Qué disparate—" began Ray chokingly, "qué mortificacion! Oh, señora—señora, I have no words!" And indeed, what chance had strange vocabulary and foreign idiom at such a moment? She stood there, white and quivering, an inarticulate

young protest.

Dolores sank into a chair beside the table. "Hija!" she faltered in deep distress, "hija mia!"

"But you, señora, you!" and Ray struck her palm

against the casing of the door.

Russell felt his heart leap in sympathy with the cry—it was the Et tu, Brute! the bitterness of betrayal, the breaking down of a trust; but he realized their widely differing points of view and understood, as Ray could not, how the old Spanishwoman's mother-instinct had carried her too far. He still held his own peace from a vague notion that

least said was soonest mended; for men—possessing as they do the right of free speech at all seasons sometimes overestimate the value of silence. While he hesitated, the shamed color flew into Ray's cheek -he had suddenly loomed large on her horizon.

"Oh-h!" she cried, in a horrified whisper, shrinking away with her hands to her face; and the yellow portières fell together in blank and stolid folds. They were still swaying mutely when Russell tore them aside and gazed up and down the empty passage, at the deserted easel, the overturned chair, the paint brushes scattered over the floor and the palette set with oily dabs of color that a surreptitious kitten was investigating.

He understood it all and was seized with an unreasoning anger against himself and his innocent accomplice, who lifted a piteous face as he strode past her, demanding what she had done and what were

they to do.

"God knows!" was the comfort he vouchsafed, with a slam of his chamber door.

No trouble is ever rendered more sufferable by the thought that we ourselves are in a large measure to blame. Russell's responsibility was perhaps the least of any, but he held himself at fault for his silence when a few English words might have saved the day. However, he was rather less cast down than he had recently been, for not only was he assured of Ray's transparent truth, but he felt a conviction stronger than ever that she cared for him—everything went to prove it. He believed that Dolores, in that last unfortunate speech, had revealed only her own opinion and not any confidence reposed in her; for, open as Ray was, she would certainly have stopped short of the supreme confession. But had she been perfectly indifferent to him she would have been less stung by the betrayal. He could well understand how an impulse of the moment had carried her away, also that the after memory of her intrusion would be something intolerable.

The remainder of the morning he spent in composing letters to her, letters which he immediately destroyed; for, writer as he was by profession, nothing now that pen or ink could express seemed ade-

quately simple and sincere.

At one o'clock, Benita announced "Almuerzo, señor!" in a subdued and melancholy whisper, as though even the kitchen had been penetrated by the universal gloom. Russell pushed his door ajar and, perceiving Don Antonio alone at the table, decided—being urged thereto by the pangs of hunger—to join him. A fourth occupant of the comedor was a disconsolate kitten, with Prussian blue whiskers and a bright vermilion paw, whom the little maid, at intervals during the otherwise silent meal, chased round the room from corner to corner by way of relieving her excessive sympathies.

Just what trouble had befallen them, Benita couldn't divine; she knew only that the señorita was locked in her room, and that the señora, with a look of heart-break in her eyes, had been sitting straight and silent for the last two hours in her armchair in the hall. But those two hours had been bleak and

bitter to Dolores: in humble and unavailing regret, she had ventured to Ray's door, and there she had been greeted by an outburst of unintelligible English words—words that, could she have known, held far less of blame than of self reproach; but, being wholly uncomprehended and muted once by a soundless sob, they had stricken the poor woman to the soul. Her daughter? this white faced young foreigner? Ah, Mother of sorrows!

To and fro, between the kitchen and the comedor, Benita went softly on deprecating feet, and the dishes were never so swiftly and noiselessly cleared away. In an incredibly short time the last crumb had been swept up, the blue table cover spread, the window shades drawn down and Michito banished from his ultimate retreat. For a while, then, the old clock had much ado to fill the silence; but when the hour hand had crept round the gaudy dial to the figure three, Russell's door was again pushed open, and in a voice restrained but full of determination, he called for the little maid.

"Benita," he said, "you will have the kindness to take this note to the señorita and wait for a reply."

"Now may heaven be thanked!" thought the Spanish girl devoutly, "for at last somebody has begun to do something to set matters straight!" and with that she made all haste to deliver the missive, which despite the hours spent over its composition was brevity itself.

"Dear Miss Woodward:

"I have a confession to make. Won't you consent to see me—if only for five minutes?

"Yours faithfully,

"E. R."

To the writer's consciousness, the period of Benita's absence bore no relation to time—it was subtracted from eternity. His feet, however, in their measured pace around the dining table, must have traveled something less than a mile, and the old clock had ticked off about fifteen minutes, when the reply was brought to him. It covered two sides of a sheet of note paper.

"Dear Mr. Russell:

"It is I who should apologize for my involuntary eavesdropping and very undignified intrusion this forenoon. I ought to have realized that you would never dream of taking literally any remark of the señora's, for you know so much better than I do that no Spanish expression is ever exactly translatable into our simpler, saner English tongue. Dolores has always thought in superlatives; what she probably meant was that I have felt a trifle hurt at your misunderstanding me the other afternoon. I may add here that I was also surprised, for such stupidity as mine ought to have been easily fathomed by you. But if this week spent as Peter's deputy has convinced you

that I am far too troublesome a charge to be imposed on a comparative stranger, you will be perfectly justified in sending in your resignation.

"Yours sincerely,

"Raven Woodward."

Three times Russell read this note; then, putting it carefully in his pocket, he took up his hat, left the house and, that evening, dined at a café.

CHAPTER XXII

As the handful of worshippers emerged from the chapel-room of the British Legation at the close of the service next morning, they must all have observed, in the ill lighted corridor, a tall figure standing sentry with arms folded across the chest, silk hat depending from the gloved fingers half hidden beneath the left elbow, bared head thrown slightly forward, chin depressed and dark eyes under level blows watching the doorway until the youngest member of the congregation made her tardy exit. Then, had any of them looked back for a moment, they would have seen that last comer pause abruptly on the threshold, while a flush, which suggested the after glow of a red sunset, dyed her cheeks and brow and even the little shell like ears; and they would have heard a low-breathed You! uttered in very evident dismay, after which the vivid color slowly faded.

"Good morning!" the man exclaimed, in a tone that would have been triumphant had it been less subdued. "Didn't you know I would be here?"

"I had no idea you were so regular in your attendance," was the dignified evasion. "That was a very good sermon we had today."

"Sorry I didn't hear it; but I arrived pretty late and for the last twenty minutes I've been walking post outside. Shall we go on, now?" he added with calm assurance, and resuming his hat fell into step with her as they passed out of the building. On the pavement a few of the congregation were loitering still, and the proximity of English ears imposed a temporary silence. Ray's heart was beating painfully; this untoward situation was of her making, so for her pride's sake she struggled to take control.

"Let us cross over," she proposed. "It is significant of Spring's progress that now one always chooses the shady side. But what a perfect day! Is it never going to rain again? For more than six

weeks I haven't seen a cloud."

"True," said Russell, while he studied her face, "it hasn't rained since—"

"Since the beginning of Lent."

"Since we turned over that new leaf," he finished meaningly, and was at once rewarded by a calcium

light effect.

"Oh, please—" with a prohibitory gesture, "if there's any moral hiding under that, don't disturb it! I always find it safer to let sleeping morals lie—they generally do, in any case, you know!" and she laughed suddenly; it was an agitato performance, like the musical protest of a glass chandelier when a daring breeze has thrown all its pendants into tinkling confusion.

Russell made no answer; he was strangely moved by her pluck, her defiatory dignity, behind which he was certain that he caught glimpses of some shrinking, quivering, wounded thing: but as he walked on at her side down the quiet street, he had a foreboding that this mood of hers was imperiling his cause. He was fearful of what might happen when he should break through her frail defenses; and yet, this opportunity, long waited for, must not be thrown away.

"Miss Woodward," he said earnestly, interrupting another brave little jest, "what do you under-

stand by a comparative stranger?"

Ray drew herself together as though in expectation of a blow. "Why, a person—" she guardedly defined, "a person of whom one knows—only the outside."

"After three months," mused Russell, "that is—discouraging. But it might have been worse. I was afraid, from your refusal to see me yesterday, that you would say: A person of whom one is *unwilling* to know more than the outside. . . . I had written you that I wanted to make a confession."

"Let yesterday go, if you please; I would rather forget it!" her voice was sharp and husky, all its musical quality dulled by emotional strain. "I wish I could wipe out all its consequences, but I'm afraid there is one I can never undo—I have deeply wounded the poor señora!" She was winking rapidly now, for it was high tide in the gray eyes.

Russell's heart ached over her as he said regret-

fully, "I also am to blame for that."

"No—oh, no!" declared Ray. "You couldn't possibly understand... It was afterwards that I—I spoke English to her; but I didn't know it—at the time," and she bit her lip in haste, her deep con-

trition blinding her entirely to the revelation in her words, to the scene they conjured up for the man beside her. A moment later, she added in her natural tone: "The señora has always been so very, very good to me that I can never forgive myself for letting such a—a trifle come between us. But there! that is my personal regret; you have nothing to do with it."

"You are determined then—" he gently demanded, "to keep me outside the bars? Has it occurred to you that that definition of yours may be one-sided in its application?" Though he waited patiently she made no response, so at length he said in the same tone of careful restraint: "You are no stranger to me, Miss—Ray."

Something of her former defiance returned to her then. "Of course," she admitted, "human nature is your especial study; you have the advantage of me

in your clearer perceptions."

"No!" the disclaimer was very earnest, "my perceptions are often sadly befogged. It is only in your direction that—love has opened up a vista. This was the confession I wanted you to hear yesterday." And now that the words were spoken all his pulses seemed to have stopped. Her face was turned away from him, but he could see two slender gray-gloved hands locked convulsively over a well worn morocco prayer book. Presently she threw back her head, facing him bravely; and he fancied he could see, through the clear eyes, her wounded pride leap from its covert.

"It is what I most wished to avoid!" she declared. "What am I to say—how can I make you understand

that I never expected, never desired to hear such words from you? The señora's mistake was excusable in one of her nationality; she thinks the whole world was made for love; she is incapable of understanding a friendship such as ours. . . Oh! yes, I admit the friendship-it was very pleasant until you spoiled it; but I never supposed it meant more than the mutual liking of two people whose tastes were rather congenial and who were temporarily forced into each other's society. And why should it? We are so different, so far apart in reality; everything in my life that really counts is unknown to you; you are almost a sealed book to me; in many things we are antagonistic—and the little I do know of your opinions has hurt me inexpressibly! Between us is a great gulf fixed, which is bridged only by the thin plank of a casual friendship . . . I wonder you haven't realized all this! I have gone over it and over it a thousand times, and I can find nothing in my speech or manner during these three months to justify you in thinking that—that I care in any other way, or that you are called upon to tax your chivalry so far as to-to pretend that you-love me!"

"My chivalry!" Russell interjected; he had made no attempt before to check the agitated torrent of her words, but now a hot incredulity took possession of him. "My chivalry!" he cried. "Do you know what you are saying? To pretend to a love that one doesn't feel is not quite so easy nowadays as binding a lady's favor to one's helmet! . . . Perhaps I ought to thank you for the implied compliment, but

God knows I don't deserve it! I hope I have always shown to women—all women—the courtesy that is their due; but beyond that—" he interrupted himself with a forced laugh, "beyond that, I am a man like any other! . . . What that fellow across the street probably feels for his lady love up there in the balcony, and what I have felt for you since—since that first morning in Tangier, are fundamentally the same emotion; we have our different ways of showing it, that's all. You may flout me, if you choose, as she does him; but, for heaven's sake, don't accuse me of any such quixotic, hero-of-romance attitude, for you wrong yourself in doing so."

Ray had no answer for him then; she was looking very blanched and weary, and a slight shiver ran over her as she looked across at the pretty love scene that was being so gaily and shamelessly acted on the sunnier side of the street.

In a second story balcony, overflowing with sweet scented geraniums and hung with a tangle of flowering vines, sat a black-haired, sunburned Madrileña, her plump elbows resting on the iron railing, her brown hands clasped under her rounded chin; and below her on the pavement, standing bareheaded in the hot sunshine with his sombrero held out in supplication, was a good looking *mozo* who, from the jauntiness of his short velvet jacket and the conspicuous newness of his crimson neck kerchief, had evidently dressed to please a sweetheart's eye. "Give me an alms, a tiny alms, of your charity, most beautiful in the world!" he was demanding at the

top of his lusty young voice. But the girl in the balcony shook her head with a laugh. "Excuse me for God's sake, little brother! I have nothing for you today!"—"Not even a single floweret, most cruel one?"—"Nothing, good beggar, nothing at all!" but even as she spoke, another vigorous shake dislodged from her temple a red geranium bloom that was tucked too loosely in the glossy braids. It fell like a glowing spark through the sunlit air and the lad beneath caught it deftly in the crown of his sombrero.

The other two, who walked silently along the shadowed pavement, could hear his triumphant laughter and his exuberant thanks until they turned the corner into another street; then, with a sudden impulse caught, perhaps, from the Spanish lad's young ardor, Russell bent over his companion.

"Ray," he said, "if I had spoken last Sunday, would your answer have been the same? There was no preposterous gulf between us then. If you will think of yesterday, remember that Dolores made no mistake about my feelings! Was she wholly wrong

about yours?"

"I have just said so!" she cried in a shaken voice with lips that trembled at the corners. "I am very, very sorry, but—I don't see how I can unsay it!"

He gazed down at her in dumb discontent; she was such a little slim white thing to be so dear, so all-essential. "Oh! well," he sighed at last, "I had been foolish enough to hope; but of course—Are you cold? Let us cross back into the sunshine."

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Ray shook her head. "It's not worth while; we are so near home—I mean, so near the Calle Mayor."

At the amendment he smiled faintly. "I suppose you begrudge that word for any but its most sacred uses."

"Ah, yes," she agreed, biting her lips again; and as they hurried through the loitering crowds on the Puerta del Sol, she held her head erect and fixed her eyes steadily on some invisible point moving always in advance. They both drew a sigh of relief on reaching the hospitable doorway where the old portero peacefully slept in his chair.

Silently they mounted the worn wooden steps to the landing marked Tercero, and somehow the plastered walls had never seemed so dingy. As Ray put out her hand to the bell by the iron grating—that only yesterday had seemed to her companion the wicket of Paradise—he checked her with a sadly

humorous smile.

"Don't ring," he besought, "I have the key—and I don't think I could endure Benita's sympathetic eye just now. Tomorrow I shall move back to my old quarters. But if I can ever be of any use—as Peter's deputy, you know—you mustn't hesitate to send for me—No, I'm not coming in. Goodbye!"

"Goodbye," she faltered, giving him her hand.

For a long moment he held fast to the slender graygloved fingers; then, dropping them suddenly, he wheeled and went down the stair. One backward glance would have shown him enough to bring him swiftly to her side again; but his own pride, like a vice, was holding his face to the front. About midnight, when the great outer doors on the Calle Mayor were securely locked and the portero was dreaming in his bed, the sereno patrolling the street answered a whistled summons, and setting down his turreted lanthorn on the pavement and leaning lazily on his spear, produced from his girdle a ponderous key and then a small wax taper by the light of which Russell climbed again to spend his last night under Dolores' roof. The next morning, Ray saw only an empty coffee cup on the breakfast table and heard nothing but the sound of heavy, shuffling feet in the hall as the desk with so many pigeon holes—that Benita had never been allowed to dust—was carried away to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXIII

Ten days more of cloudless weather! Spring's April mood this year was altogether sunny and smiling-heartlessly smiling, in the face of parched and drooping fields that waited vainly for her pitiful Beyond the Guadarrama mountains, on the treeless, wind-blown plains of Old Castile, the wheat and barley sown in the preceding autumn had patiently struggled upward through the hard dry soil, only to wilt and die now in the golden glare. The usual season for life-giving rains was passing away without a single shower, and the whole land was athirst,—even the rich hillsides of Andalusia and the broad pastures of the west; and, in a country devoted so largely to agricultural pursuits, this meant widespread ruin and distress. The chief sufferers were probably small farmers owning only a few hectares of arable land,—their methods of cultivation being primitive in the extreme; but even where irrigation was resorted to, a prolonged drought entailed great loss. And so this unfortunate country, saddled as it was with debt, troubled with internal disaffection and harassed by a war that was sapping its very life blood, was now confronted with a new danger the starvation of man and beast. Already the price of flour had risen, and the rolls on the señora's breakfast table each cost two centimos instead of one.

And this was at a time, too, when Dolores-with her house emptied of all guests but Don Antonio and the American girl-had other anxieties of her own. Pablo's injury had proven far more serious than was at first supposed; he was still bound to his crutch, with the disheartening prospect of an incurable lame-His eldest child, José—named for the señora's husband-had bravely assumed the care of the farm; but with a rainless spring, the odds were hopelessly against him: besides the loss of the crop, it meant the sacrifice of the two mules and the little burro, who would soon be eating their heads off, with provender so scarce. Bearing all this in mind, the señora added to her daily supplications an earnest prayer for rain; and, every morning, as she threw open her window and looked up at the smiling heavens, her heart would sink and her trust, for one moment, waver,-for surely the blessed saints were grown very hard of hearing!

The same prayer was regularly offered up in all the churches of the city; but the Madrileñians, for the most part, seemed to feel very little concern. With a faith so sublime that it amounted to irresponsibility, they ejaculated, "God help us, or we starve next year!" and at the same moment jingled the pesetas in their pockets and spent them with a lavish hand. For the madness of the springtime was in their blood; love and laughter filled the perfumed air; in the Recoletos, the chestnut trees tossed their zinnober plumes over an army of mantillas and sombreros; on the Prado, around the little booths and

tables, lingered a gay crowd from morning till night; every beggar in town had his capa in pawn and was living merrily on the proceeds.

But the pleasure seekers of a community are only the froth upon the cup, hiding much good wine and true—and some dregs of bitterness. To many a heart in Madrid, that springtime was a mockery. The dressmaker's apprentice, whom Ray met one afternoon creeping softly down the stairway from her day's work in the attic, lifted dumb eyes of misery at the young foreigner's gentle questioning; her sweetheart's name had been listed once again, amongst those who have been granted their long

furlough.

As the two girls clasped hands there on the dim landing, to one of them there came a revelation-of the dignity of love, the inevitability of sorrow and the paltriness of pride; and that night she wept very long and bitterly to think that, like most of life's lessons, this was learned too late! During these April days an unwonted reserve had grown around her; her relations with the señora, too, were somewhat changed: the words hija and madre had fallen into a conscious desuetude for which neither Ray nor Dolores was alone responsible, and which was a source of much pain to both. The old Spanish woman had put on a new punctiliousness toward her young guest; while lavishing even greater care upon her comfort and security she approached her with none of the old tender familiarities, and Ray was diffident of inviting them. Mr. Russell's name was never mentioned; but sometimes, looking up from

her easel, Ray would surprise a wistful regret in the señora's eyes, and then Dolores would leave her chair and try to draw the palette from the young artist's hand, saying: "You are tired, señorita; your face shows it. Rest now, and let me bring you a glass of wine and a bit of cake, or an orange-just an orange and a few grapes to put strength into your fingers!" At which Ray would smile and shake her head, declaring that her hand had never been so steady nor her eye so true. And indeed, this appeared to be the case. She was working on this portrait with a passionate fervor, seeming to regard it in the light of an expiation—to Dolores and to Art. Into it she put all the lessons of the past three months—the added technical skill resulting from faithful effort, an honest imitation of the style of the great master she had studied, a tender admiration for the mellowed beauty of her old model and something more that was indefinable-something that thrilled from her heart to her finger tips, giving reverence to her every touch.

On the last Friday in April, she was cleaning her palette after a hard morning's work when she heard a familiar voice in the hall exclaiming cheerily:

"Hello! Benita, where's Miss Ray?"

"Peter!" she cried, rushing out with her usual impetuosity, "Why, Peter! What a delightful surprise! You didn't write me you were coming—but oh, you dear, dimpled, big brown Brobdingnagian cherub, I am so glad to see you!"

"Don't take it all out in adjectives!" he urged laughingly, prisoning her outstretched hand in a

hearty clasp. "Why, from the way you came flying through the door just now, I thought you meant to

give a fellow a welcome worth having."

"If you are not satisfied with this, sir—" and she retreated promptly to a safer distance, "you must nibble that Wonderland mushroom and shrink to your proper size—in knickerbockers and frills! But where are the Staffords? Have you left them behind?"

"Well, you see, it was this way. Stafford's improved wonderfully since the good news came from the Salon; he's fit for work again—in moderation, and he thought this one week could be spent more profitably in Seville. But I knew you were pining for the sight of me—eh? Well then, I was pining for the sight of you, so I decided to come on ahead. I've promised to pack up the studio here and have everything shipped to Paris, and he and Mrs. S. will join us on today week—that'll be the first of May. Do you think you could be ready to leave Madrid by the fifth?"

"To leave—Madrid!" she dully echoed. "To part with Dolores and—and begin all over again among strangers in another foreign city! Oh, Peter, I do dread it! . . . But of course, I can be ready any

day Mr. Stafford appoints."

"Then that's settled," said Peter, always brisk and business-like. "Don't fret over it, Miss Ray—we'll soon find some nice old madame to take the señora's place. Just think how much worse you would feel if you were parting from me," and his blue eyes

twinkled with happy impudence. "Now give us the news. But stop—is Russell in? I have a letter for him."

Ray caught her breath quickly. For days she had been anticipating this scene and rehearsing her answer to the inevitable question; but now it was very hard to adapt her voice to the careless words, "Didn't I write you that he had moved back to the hotel?"

"What!" cried Peter, and thrusting his hands in his pockets he whistled a prolonged note of astonishment. At her explanation, which was fluent but evasive, he shook his head in manifest dubiety; for in the distressed color of her cheek quite another story was legible. "Oh, lord!" he inly ejaculated, "what an ass I've been not to see this coming! Love passages and a rumpus—poor Russell!" and he shook his head again.

"But the most important news—" she hurriedly continued, "is that Don Francisco returned yesterday—a Benedict. He married his cousin three weeks ago, made his will and has come back alone to

his duty before the end of the honeymoon."

"Francisco be hanged!" Peter was staring gloomily at the door of Russell's deserted chamber.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Ray. "Did you know

he was ordered to Cuba in June?"

"No, I didn't. But if this is a marriage of convenience, I dare say he'll be glad to go. Anyhow, if he isn't first hanged or shot he'll probably soon choke himself to death over a plate of garbanzos. I'm not wasting my sympathies on any blamed

Spaniard just at present. It's a good thing we are going so soon; I hope there'll be some peace and quiet when we get to Paris, for these continual changes play the mischief with one's work. But I'll be sorry to see the last of Russell—he isn't the sort of fellow to be met with every day. Stafford thinks the world and all of him—and with good reason. By the way, I knocked off a pretty nice sketch myself, last week, and Stafford's going to work it in with his own illustrations, if Russell fancies it. We've been in quite a millennial mood down in Seville, everybody doing unto others as they'd like to be done by-all but Mrs. Dering, who's been leading Dr. Hazeldean a dance. Strikes me what upset the garden of Eden was the woman and not the serpent; Adam and the whole menagerie might have been there yet."

"You speak feelingly. What woman has invaded

your Eden?-Miss Gladys Hazeldean?"

Then it was Peter's turn to blush. "Well, hardly. She may have looked over the garden wall, for she's awfully pretty and pleasant; but I don't suppose I'll ever see her again after she leaves Madrid."

"She's coming here?"

"She's here now. We all came up in the same train—Mrs. Dering and her aunt and the Hazeldeans and me," he concluded, reckless of grammar.

"So it wasn't for my sake that you hurried on ahead. Oh, Peter! that was disingenuous of you.

I'm afraid you're growing up!"

"Heaven forbid!" he answered, straightening his lithe young figure. "I can't afford to, you know can't afford to do anything but just kick up my heels when I get a chance. What's more, I must manage to sell some canvases in Paris—on any terms. It's all very well for Stafford, at his age, to be holding his pictures at a price; but I'm quite willing to let a few of my earlier master-pieces go for a song—I'm sure there's precedent for it! But I say, what work have you been after since I left? Did you ever paint that sketch of the señora?"

"Come and see," and she led him out into the hall where, on her easel, the painting rested; it was considerably more than a sketch, yet by no means a highly finished portrait. Ray drew up the nearest window shade, pulled the easel into a better light and, stepping aside, waited anxiously for Peter's criticism.

Whistling softly, he studied it for nearly five minutes; then, turning on his heel, stared hard at

the slim girl behind him.

"It's great!" he said earnestly. "Gospel English—it's great! I didn't know you had it in you,—Stafford'll be proud of his pupil. We were talking about you just the other day, and he said that although your work was apt to be unequal, it occasionally showed touches of something like genius. Every Monday, for instance, you sketched in the new model with spirit and enthusiasm, and on Saturdays your last study was inspired by a sort of desperate courage—."

"But my Thursday's and Friday's work was usually a total failure; I know that. At one time I used to think it was my being a woman that made me incapable of more sustained effort, but now

I believe temperament has most to do with it. This time my enthusiasm didn't give out, and—I needed all my courage from the start. You can't realize, Peter, what I've put into this picture. I don't believe I'll ever do anything better!"

Her companion again shifted his eyes from the canvas to her face, which he scrutinized with brotherly freedom. "I'm afraid, little girl, you've put in considerable flesh and blood; you are not near so blooming as when I left you. But as to your never doing better, that's nonsense. Why, this is only the result of your winter's study; I can see in every touch the influence of Velazquez and Ribera."

"Not Ribera, I think; his brush is so often cruel, while Velazquez never is—whatever his subject."

"Well, perhaps so. I know Stafford will say your treatment of the face and hands is 'poetic.' I like immensely that plain black drapery about the head; and, in spite of its being so very sorrowful, the whole pose is dignified, distinguished Do you know, I think you could get it into the Salon? It's too late for this year, of course; but I doubt if you do paint anything better in the next six or eight months. For myself, I've always believed more in grind than in inspiration, but you are so differently constituted. Look here, Miss Ray-" he took her gently by one slender wrist and held up her hand before the window. "What is this made of, anyhow? Compared with this big, brawny fist of mine it's like one of those pink blossoms yonder in the señora's flower pot—I could crush it between my finger and thumb. Talk about sustained effort! Why, a little more of this sort of thing and you'd go out like a snuffed candle. I'll bet you've been dreaming at night of every stroke you made by day!"

She laughed guiltily, a faint blush warming her pale cheeks. "For a cherub, Peter, you are growing too clever by far. But do you really think this portrait would stand any chance with a Parisian

jury?"

"It's worth trying. You remember Watson—'Grannie' Watson? I hear he has something now at the Champ-de-Mars; and it's all on the strength of his New York training, for he came abroad only six months ago. He was always a capital draughtsman, but I've never seen a canvas of his that was a patch on this. Ask Stafford."

"I certainly will," she said, with smiling skepticism. "You are a charming critic, but too partial

entirely."

Nevertheless, she began to build much hope on Peter's honest commendation. She could see with her own eyes that in technique this far surpassed anything that she had previously done; and as to her achievement of that subtle quality which Mr. Stafford always summed up in the word poetic, she had soon the convincing testimony of the señora herself.

The final sitting took place on the following day; and, when it was over and Ray had put aside her brushes, Dolores came and stood in silent contemplation before her counterfeit. When asked, very timidly, for an expression of opinion, she slowly answered: "I think, señorita, that—if the spirits of

the faithful departed are ever permitted to look down upon those they have left behind, and if my José could behold me once again—I should wish him to see me thus. For then, not the fading and withering of the flesh would be most evident, nor the weariness of a lonely widowhood, but the love that is yet in my heart for him—and the hope that is keeping it alive!"

CHAPTER XXIV

It was mid-afternoon on the Prado, and the yellow sunlight was blazing and quivering in the open or sifting like gold dust through the leafy aisles. The air was warm and still and dry. At either end of the great square, where the fountains of Neptune and Cybele tossed their silver showers, tired pedestrians often lingered in passing to hear the falling drops purl softly in the big stone basins. It was a thirsty hour, and all along the avenue the puestos, or booths, were doing a driving trade in the various "soft drinks" to which the Spaniards are so largely given. On each tiny counter stood the earthen botijo, bedewed with moisture, or a churn of horchata de chufas; and ranged on the shelves above were glasses of all shapes and sizes, jars of the foam-like confections known as azucarillos, rows upon rows of bottles containing sirups and essences, and the inevitable long-necked vial of aguardiente. Before each booth, in the pleasant shade of the nearest tree, was a little round wooden table with a full complement of weather-beaten chairs. Many of these were occupied by domestic groups,—a paterfamilias sipping his brandy and water, his dark-eyed wife and brownfaced children each provided with a glass of frozen horchata which they noisily imbibed through a straw. Here and there, a nursemaid and her charges lingered to chat with a friendly proprietress; and at one puesto, where the attendant Hebe chanced to be young and pretty, the table was surrounded by a party of jovial bachelors who appeared to discover as much spirit in her badinage as in the long-necked vials on her shelves.

At a booth near the corner of the Alcalá, our two young art students were indulging in a limonada by way of refreshment in the midst of their afternoon labors. The mood of each was characteristic; Peter leaned forward with his elbows on the table, talking enthusiastically of their future plans, and Ray—silent, but smiling encouragement—listened with half an ear, acutely conscious meanwhile of every detail in the surrounding scene.

"I do believe—" exclaimed the boy, suddenly impressed by the wistfulness in her face, "I do believe

you would rather stay behind!"

"N-no," said Ray, "but there is more of the vegetable than the vagabond in my nature. I feel as poor Jo must have done when he heard the inevitable Move on! I think, Peter, the Southerner takes root more quickly than you children of a colder clime; and I am certain that it is the strength of our affections that makes us so averse to change—we Charlestonians become positively fond of our makeshifts and our nuisances. It isn't so much that we are unpropressive as that we have the great gift of contentment, which I fancy you Northerners lack. Look at Mrs. Dering, for instance; she is hardly a fair type, but—"

"Speak of the angels!" interrupted Peter, lifting his hat. "Yonder she comes now with Russell and the Hazeldeans. She must be perfectly scandalized to see us sitting here; for although she has quite a leaning to bohemianism even when it's a little bit shady, she has a mortal dread of doing anything bourgeois—never mind how respectable it may be!"

"That comes of living in big cities," opined Ray, smiling calmly, though her pulses were fairly leaping at the sight of one tall figure in the approaching group. "Now a Charlestonian rises superior to such a fear, for in our happy provincialism whatever we

choose to do becomes at once good form."

Peter's eyes twinkled. "I'm afraid," he wickedly said, "some people might mistake your Southern contentment for conceit!" Then, before she could retaliate, he started forward to greet the new comers, who were four in number. At Mrs. Dering's side was a fresh-colored Englishman, whom Peter familiarly hailed as "Doc"; Russell walked behind with the sister, who was very young and superlatively blond.

Amid a chorus of greetings and introductions, Ray felt her hand taken in a firm clasp, while a quiet

voice demanded how she did.

"Very well, thank you," and she met the dark eyes

squarely. "How does your novel progress?"

"Not so satisfactorily as I could wish," said he. "I have somehow lost touch with my characters—the reviewers will find me 'unconvincing.' But I suppose it is almost impossible to maintain the same

mood throughout an entire book—unless one is another Balzac—and I can never hope to develop his capacity either for invention, speed or coffee."

His first words had been quite serious, but the last were lightly spoken—so lightly that she was moved with a sudden resentment and turned quickly away,

to encounter Mrs. Dering's scrutiny.

"Poor Mr. Russell!" exclaimed that lady. "He hasn't yet recovered from his course of Spanish cookery. Aren't you ill, too, of the garlic and oil? We've endured so much of it in the last six weeks that we quite appreciate the chef here at this hotel."

Ray's resentment deepened: no doubt he had offered that excuse for his change of quarters! She drew back rather coldly, allowing Peter to engage the attention of the group; and while his merry tongue ran on, her absent gaze lost itself in the green vistas and her ears became deaf to the talk around her. Even when the royal carriage—in which the boy-King sat primly beside his mother—rolled by on its way to the Retiro, she took no note of it; but she was presently roused by a ripple of amusement and Peter's voice exclaiming: "What do you think, Miss Ray?"

Being utterly at a loss as to the subject under dis-

cussion, she could only smile vaguely in reply.

"Miss Gladys says it must seem so unnatural to us Americans not to have any Royal Family,—what do you think of that?" he demanded; and, without pausing for an answer, rattled on: "How awfully queer it must seem to you English, Miss Gladys, not to be able to bet on every small boy's chances for the Presidency!"

"What a droll idea!" returned Miss Hazeldean. "I suppose that's an American joke," and she wrinkled her pretty forehead in real or assumed perplexity.

Ray laughed now with the rest, and joining in the conversation discovered soon that she herself was an object of much interest to the English girl, with whom Peter had been as communicative as usual.

"I've wanted so much to meet you; Mr. Harding promised that I should, but he seems to be a very unreliable person! We need not thank him for this lucky encounter. And he gave me his word, too, that I should have a peep into the studio before it was pulled to pieces."

"I'm afraid he has forgotten that," said Ray, "for he began to pack things there this morning. It must be in a dreadful state of confusion; but if you care to come with us now, we were on our way there."

This suggestion was received with enthusiasm, not only by Miss Hazeldean but by Peter, whose amended invitation included the whole party. "It's dusty and messy, of course, for we haven't used it or cleaned it up in three weeks; but all our winter's work is still on exhibition, and some of Stafford's things and Miss Ray's latest are really worth seeing. Come on, Mrs. Dering—come on, everybody; it's a free show, better not miss it!"

Nobody wanted to miss it, apparently; for they started off at once—all, that is, but Russell, who hesitated a moment while his eye sought Ray's.

"Aren't you coming too?" she inquired, with a vivid blush. "I'd like to show you my portrait of Dolores."

"Thank you," was the quick response, "I shall be delighted," and joining Dr. Hazeldean, he brought up the rear of the procession.

On their arrival at the studio, it became immediately evident that the dust and disorder were no mere figure of speech. Mrs. Dering gathered up her dainty skirts distrustfully as she picked her way between the huge boxes and the heaps of drapery, art materials and curios of all kinds that littered the floor; even Ray looked a bit dismayed on finding Peter's methods to be so masculine and energeticfor, so far, he seemed to have done his packing very much as he would have shoveled coal. But he, himself, was not in the least abashed, ushering them through with cheerful courtesy. "This way, Mrs. Dering! 'Ware the paint bucket, Miss Gladys! You'll find Stafford's work here, Miss Ray's on that side, and mine-representing quantity if not quality —over yonder," and he modestly indicated the thirty or forty spirited studies tacked up on the opposite wall.

To Russell, the room and most of its contents were already familiar; so, while the others slowly made the rounds, admiring and criticising with more or less discrimination, he crossed directly to the corner where Ray was uncovering the señora's portrait, which had been brought here only a few hours before.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as she made place for him, "evidently you have not wasted this last fortnight! I had no idea you could paint so well!"

Detecting the suppressed bitterness in his tone, she glanced up in gentle deprecation and asked if he

found it like.

"Very, touchingly so!" he said. "Perhaps you have idealized her a little, but—"

"Oh, no!" Ray interrupted, "I have done her

barely justice. You don't know her as I do."

"True," he admitted, with a smile half sad, half tender. "What you see in people is usually their very best,—so how poor must those be whose best has failed to—"

She lifted one hand in piteous protest, and then turned quickly away to hide the trouble in her eyes. Russell made no attempt to follow her, but stood where he was for several minutes with arms folded and eyes fixed on the canvas before him. He was realizing for the first time that her art might be the real obstacle between them; he had never taken it very seriously until now, his own work being of vastly greater importance in all his calculations. But if Ray could paint like this she was justified in thinking of her possible career, which marriage would inevitably cut short. He wondered now at the egregious egotism that had blinded him hitherto, that had made him so ready to say to her: "Lay down your own tools and carry the hod for me!"

Mrs. Dering drifted round to his side and professed great admiration for the portrait. "I like the simplicity of the color scheme,—don't you? just that

black figure against the creamy wall; it's so very decorative. I declare, it would be just the thing for that difficult panel in my summer library. You've never seen my Southhampton cottage, Mr. Russell—you must pay us a visit in August. I've had more trouble with that one room than with all the rest of the house put together; there's one panel between two south windows that is driving me to an early grave. I have a mirror hanging there now, and I do detest mirrors in a library—they always seem to me so out of place. This picture would be in admirable taste there—I wonder if Miss Woodward cares to sell it! I have a great mind to ask," and she wandered off in pursuit of the young artist.

For some time past, Ray's conscience had convicted her of a secret antagonism to Mrs. Dering, which she had vainly endeavored to justify to herself on the ground of the other's self-absorption. She was well aware that her own transparency was as apt to betray her dislikes as her likings; and, fearing now that she had been negligent of this visitor, she left the group with which she had been chatting and hastened to meet her half way. Mrs. Dering made the proposition at once—and rather too bluntly, thought Russell, who could overhear and was not at all surprised at Ray's prompt and decided declination.

"But why?" demanded the would-be purchaser. "I thought all artists expected to sell their pictures. If it's a question of terms, you have only to name your price."

"It's not a question of terms, however," declared Ray, with gentle dignity. "In fact, if it came to that, I would have no idea how to value my work, for I have never sold anything before but a few little sketches in New York. But even if I cared to part with this picture, I wouldn't do so now—as I have other plans in regard to it."

"Part with what picture?" demanded Peter, hurrying up. "The señora's portrait? No, no, Mrs. Dering; you can't have that—unless you are willing to wait a year for it. We have our eye on that for

the Salon next spring."

"Oh, I must either have it now or not at all; my courier must see it packed and shipped with my other purchases before we leave Madrid. I think you might use your influence in my behalf, Mr. Harding—for I really want it exceedingly. What would you consider a fair price for it? Two hundred and fifty?—or three hundred? I'm quite willing to pay that much."

Giving him no time to reply, Ray broke in with a little embarrassed laugh and declared that, while she appreciated Mrs. Dering's insistence, she desired her first answer to be taken as final.

Afterward, when the visitors had left, Peter applauded her decision; for, although he conceded that the offer had been liberal enough for the work of an unknown art student, he was of the opinion that, in Paris, Ray would find the prestige of the portrait worth more to her than the money.

"It is just possible," she agreed, "although neither you nor I, Peter, have any very clear idea yet of Par-

isian standards. But aside from all our hopes, I would like always to keep it for the señora's sake. Hers is no common type. Don't you recognize the prophetic significance of her name? Dolores—Sorrows. But all her troubles have been borne with an admirable courage! To me she is the personification of faithful widowhood, and I have tried to express something of that in painting her.—Now of course, I know nothing of Mrs. Dering's past; but I am sure she can have no sympathy with my thought. She offers to buy the portrait as she would a—"

"A piece of Moorish embroidery," suggested

Peter, with a half smile.

"Exactly,—for its decorative value alone. I couldn't bear that! She's the last person in the world I should wish to sell it to!"

Peter laughed. "I see you are not above nourish-

ing an old grudge, Miss Ray."

"Perhaps so," she admitted with mounting color. "Call that a third reason if you like! Ambition, sentiment, pride—entirely too much to be sacrified for a

paltry three hundred dollars!"

"You wouldn't be calling 'em paltry if your letter of credit had run as near dry as mine has," and he chuckled sadly. "All the same, if you can afford not to, I wouldn't dream of selling—certainly not before Stafford gives his opinion."

"I have no idea of doing so at all," she decisively answered; then they both applied themselves to the reduction of the surrounding disorder and nothing

more was said upon the subject.

To Peter, therefore, it was a matter of infinite surprise and conjecture when, only twenty-four hours later, Ray informed him that she had changed her mind and accepted Mrs. Dering's offer; the portrait was to be sent for at once by a neighboring art dealer and packed for immediate shipment. This unnecessary haste—when the Staffords were expected within two days—added fuel to his wrath and disappointment, which blazed over her without restraint for several minutes and was only temporarily subdued by her rising tears.

"Don't you suppose I mind it?" she demanded with quivering lips. "I begged hard for two days of grace—it does seem too bad that Mr. Stafford won't see it. I would have given a great deal just to hear him say Well done! But Mrs. Dering doesn't like to

wait for things, you know."

"But what the dickens made you sell? You didn't really need the money. I declare, there's no counting on a woman's whims! What's become of your three weighty reasons? Has that three hundred dol-

lars grown any, that it equals them today?"

"No, Peter; but I am actuated now by a new motive—one which I don't care to disclose." Then a smile flickered over her face. "If you must know, this motive is equal to the other three reasons plus the three hundred dollars!"

And, further than this, she would tell him nothing.

CHAPTER XXV

When the last day of April dawned without a shadow in the burnished blue, without even a cloudlet small as a man's hand, the Queen Regent issued a proclamation through the pulpits of Madrid to the effect that on the ensuing Sunday would be celebrated a grand rogativa, or procession for water, in which Her Majesty's self, the young King, all the city officials and church dignitaries would take part, attended, as was usual on such occasions, by a vast following of the people. In the midst of this solemn parade, the shrine containing the bones of San Isidro-the pious husbandman of the twelfth century—would be borne around the city, in reverent expectation that, as the good Saint in his lifetime had been blessed with plenteous harvests, his intercession now would procure for his countrymen the rains of which they stood so much in need.

And here, lest the chronicler of this history be charged with lack of candor, let it be said, parenthetically, that about this time the Weather Bureau held forth hopes of an approaching atmospheric depression. But who is so credulous as to stake any chances

upon the infallibility of a Weather Bureau?

It was upon San Isidro, whose birthplace is still pointed out among the tottering houses of the Calle del Aguila, whose shrine is far famed for its miracle working powers, whose name is hallowed by legends innumerable—notably that beautiful one of the angel with the milk white oxen, who, while the devout laborer knelt at prayer in the chapel hard by, plowed the straightest furrow in his task,—it was upon San Isidro, patrón of Madrid, that the disheartened people now built their trust. For it was on record that, more than two hundred years ago (when there were no Weather Bureaus) in a similar season of drought and despondency, the shrine had been thus brought forth, and before the procession could return, lo! the heavens had given rain. So might it be again, they said, and smiled at each other and took courage.

However, there was one very important personage whom the Queen had neglected to consult before making her benevolent and confident plans for the people's relief; this was neither high official nor priestly potentate, but a greater than any: it was his sovereign majesty, el torero. And, although Saturday would be the "Dos de Mayo"—a great military fiesta and always a special day in his calendar, he had no mind to forego the profits of the usual Sunday bull fight. His program for the two days had been arranged months in advance; fortunes might be already staked upon his suertes; the brave beasts that were to meet their fate at his hands—themselves worth many thousand pesetas—had been supplied for the two occasions; the very seats and boxes of the Circus had been subscribed. Either the procession or the bull fight would have to be postponed, but—it would not be the bull fight! As in most cases where a weaker power discovers itself in opposition to a stronger, Doña Maria Cristina found it expedient to give way. A later proclamation announced that the *rogativa* would be celebrated on Monday.

Meanwhile, there was a little reunion in the Calle Mayor; for the Staffords arrived on Friday and, that night, Russell dropped in to welcome them. Dinner was still in progress and Benita found him a chair. It was quite like old times, said Don Antonio, and the others warmly assented; but two of the party avoided each other's eyes and were very glad of the laughter that Peter provoked by a reference to the change in Francisco's condition. The young officer took the jest in good part and airily waved his wine glass by way of reply; outwardly, he was quite unchanged, neither matrimony nor prospective exile semed to weigh on his spirits and, a few minutes later, he was playing philopena with Ray. The rest fell to chatting about Seville; and presently Mr. Stafford excused himself to bring out his portfolio of sketches, which he passed around the circle when the table was cleared.

It was just one of those informal hours, delightful in themselves, that nevertheless widen the breach between persons situated as Ray and Russell then were. Since the shock of that Sunday's parting, they had met only in a crowd, when self restraint was imperative. Had it been otherwise, had they come upon each other face to face, and alone, while yet their memories were tingling and before habit had taught them to speak in commonplaces, there is no doubt that the subject nearest their hearts would have

been reopened. As it was, every careless remark, every unmeaning glance that passed between them seemed to thicken the fog that hid them from each other. And this might be their last meeting in many years; for the author's intention was to leave for Paris, with Mrs. Dering's party, on Monday night.

When he announced this, Peter declared it was a shame! Why not wait one day longer and go all

together in a big, jolly party?

"That would be impossible for me," said Russell, and went on to explain that he had already strained a point to oblige Mrs. Dering, who wanted to witness the *rogativa*, and now he would have very little time to spare, as he was sailing from Havre in a fortnight.

"You are going back to America—you are going

home!" cried Ray.

"Yes," he said, "I am going home. When will the term of your exile be over?"

"Don't you know?" she returned, with a reckless

laugh. "When I have a picture in the Salon."

Peter burst out with something unintelligible anent wasted opportunities, but she checked him with such an appealing look that he was fain to cover up his remark. "Fact is," he said, "Art is so long and Time so fleeting that I believe the best way to get wealthy is to buy a lottery ticket—like every other beggar in Madrid! Look at this—" and he pulled a newspaper from his pocket, "here's an extra, giving the results of today's sorteo. The prizes all together amount to hundreds of thousands of pesetas!"

Francisco started up hastily. "Have the goodness

to let me see it, caballero!"

"Oh, ho!" laughed Peter, as he pushed the paper over, "so you are an interested party! Well—what luck?"

Naturally, all attention was centred on the young Spaniard, who was staring open mouthed at the tall headlines, unable to credit the testimony of his own bewildered eyes. In the list of winning numbers, five big black figures danced, dilated and grew indistinguishable as he gazed; they belonged to the ticket that had drawn the second prize of twenty thousand duros. He caught his breath, winked rapidly and looked again—and the figures settled back into position. 11003. There was no doubt of it. "Caspita!" he gasped feebly, and smote his forehead with his open palm in so tragic a manner that the table smiled.

"What is it?" asked Ray kindly. "Have you won, or lost?"

He regarded her in blank confusion for a second or two. "No, señorita, I have won nothing—nothing!" Then he pushed back his chair and, rising speechlessly, left the room.

"Poor fellow!" said Ray, "no doubt he counted on a fortune! Peter, my friend, I think you had better let lotteries alone and devote yourself to Art,

long as it is!"

At ten o'clock, Don Antonio said he must leave them for his nightly game of chess at the Café Suizo, and Russell proposed to accompany him, for the travelers both looked tired. He declined Mr. Stafford's invitation to dine with them on Sunday, having already promised himself to Señor de Tolosa; and shaking hands all round, he bade them a provisional farewell, for what with the many and varied functions of the next three days he might be prevented from calling again. The two men promised to hunt him up themselves; Mrs. Stafford sent numberless messages to the Hazeldeans and Mrs. Dering's aunt, who had all been so attentive to them in Seville; Ray smilingly declared that she would be looking out for the new novel and the illustrated articles: to all of which the author made appropriate but rather perfunctory replies, while Don Antonio fidgeted in the background and looked two or three times at his watch.

At last it was all over and the hall door had closed behind them. Then Mr. Stafford tied up his portfolio, his wife yawned and remarked that she had no idea she was so sleepy, Peter stood up with his hands in his pockets and gloomily defied them to pick up a finer fellow than Russell anywhere, and Ray—saying nothing at all—vanished precipitately.

CHAPTER XXVI

Saturday, as we have said before, was the "Dos de Mayo." At breakfast, Don Antonio entertained them with hereditary anecdotes of Napoleon's invasion, the popular uprising in 1808, and the gallant deaths of Luis Daoiz and Pedro Velarde, "heroes de la libertad de la patria!" All the morning, resplendent uniforms paraded under the señora's windows and the Puerta del Sol was a field of flashing bayonets.

Peter's enthusiasm for everything military carried him out into the thickest of the crowd, and he returned at noon in such a sanguinary frame of mind that nothing would content him but a bull fight. With specious arguments, he persuaded Mr. Stafford and Ray to join him—the one, because he could carry his sketch book and add to his collection of tauromachic studies; the other, because this week day performance afforded her a last and not-to-be-neglected opportunity of witnessing the national sport. Mrs. Stafford, however, when pressed to go as chaperon, flatly declined; she had sacrificed herself once in Seville for the sake of her husband and Art, but she had no idea of making herself an oblation to Mrs. Grundy. People whose sensibilities were not too delicate for such bloody spectacles could afford to dispense with chaperons, she said. Whereupon Ray shuddered and began to look dubious, but Peter had already flown out to the nearest despacho for tickets.

When he came back it was with rather a crestfallen air, for all the choice places had been sold; at this eleventh hour it would be impossible to buy three—or even two adjoining seats in any part of the Circus. He had done his best, but he didn't know what Miss Ray would think; however, she must look at the billetes and decide the matter for herself. With that, he spread the green slips on the table before her.

"This is yours, a front seat in the lower gallery; the surrounding chairs will be filled chiefly by ladies, and you'd be perfectly safe there—only a little lonely. This next ticket is for a seat much lower down, near the barrier, where Mr. Stafford will be close enough to the performers to make a few lightning sketches. The third seat, which I will take, is just midway between the other two and within speaking distance of both. Now . . . are you brave enough to risk it?"

"Oh, if it's only a question of bravery—" began Ray, looking slightly nettled, "of course I'll risk it."

"But suppose you wanted to leave!" said Mrs.

Stafford.

"All she would have to do," interrupted Peter, "would be to poke me through the railing with the end of her parasol and I would come round to her at once."

"If I decide to go, I will stay it out."

"Well, you haven't much time to decide in; the performance begins in an hour. Shall we toss a peseta? Heads—go, tails—"

"Stop!" exclaimed Ray, "that's childish. If Mrs.

Stafford thinks there's no impropriety-"

"Oh, don't leave the responsibility of the decision

on my shoulders," protested that lady.

"Leave it on mine," Peter urged. "It all depends on the character you are going in. For a Madrileñian, it would be shocking; for an American girl who was known here in social circles, it would be questionable; but for a dignified young art student with plenty of common sense, it's all right. Go put on your hat!"

"I'll be ready in five minutes."

"Good for you!" he applauded. "I expected no less from a Charlestonian—it's a great thing to be a law unto yourself, eh? Hurry up, then! Mr. Stafford'll wait for you while I hunt up a cab. Hip, hip, hurrah!" and he tore off again like a young hurricane, leaving Ray very indignant, but unable to resist a laugh.

She was thankful that his hilarity was of that spontaneous quality that requires no encouragement, for her own spirits were like a spring run dry; she had grasped at the prospect of this novel experience only because it might divert her thoughts from the quarter to which they now constantly tended: one

face, one voice had haunted her all day.

But she was soon to realize the futility of flying from such memories. As their cab rolled away up the Alcalá, she found herself living over all the scenes of that Sunday riot: she heard the hoarse cries of the mob; she felt the crush, the weakness, the terror, the ineffable security born of his coming; and she recalled his every look and word during their homeward drive through this very street! It was all far

more real to her than the actual present, with Mr. Stafford on the seat beside her, dreamily sharpening his pencils, and Peter opposite, laughing mirthfully at his own jokes

at his own jokes.

Meanwhile, they had fallen in with the long procession of carriages, cabs and stages, rolling, rattling and rumbling along on the highway that leads to the bull ring; and all at once Peter started to his feet, wildly waving his hat.

"Look yonder!" he exclaimed. "That golden haired girl—in the brougham that passed us—did

you recognize her? I know it's Miss Gladys!"

"Who was she with?" demanded Ray ungram-

matically.

"Mrs. Dering, I think; Russell and the Doctor were on the seat in front—Mrs. Dering likes to have two strings to her bow," he added maliciously.

Ray's color deepened, but she very justly observed that a superabundance of strings seemed to be always at Mrs. Dering's service. Nevertheless, the little encounter put an effectual period to her revery.

The dust was suffocating, the afternoon sun unpleasantly warm. Soon, the cab turned into the wide Plaza de Toros, and the cochero lashed his horses to a gallop. Before them, in the distance—a clay colored silhouette against the clear blue sky—loomed the huge amphitheatre, its severe outline unrelieved save by the peaked summit of the Moorish portal, over which a tall flagstaff arose and flaunted a rag of crimson. Their approach was in the nature of a chariot race; their competitors, every vehicle in sight. But when they pulled up at last, within a hun-

dred feet of the Circus, it seemed as though the city's entire population had arrived before them: it might have been the unfinished tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues. And high above the din rose the cry of the newsboys: "La Lidia—La Lidia—Revista Taurina—Progra-a-a-ma Official de

Especta-a-a-culos!"

Dazed and deafened, Ray clung to Mr. Stafford's arm, while Peter's broad young shoulders cleared a passage through the crowd. Forcing an entrance at the horse-shoe arch, they gained a curving corridor, climbed a flight of stairs, and through a second corridor emerged on a pillared gallery. Beneath them, lay the vast arena—a circle of sunlit sand eclipsed by a crescent of shadow. It was rimmed by two barriers—a frail wooden fence, breast-high, and an outer wall of stone. The encompassing seats, built also of stone, were obscured by a bank of sombreros. Above these were the galleries, of which the upper one was divided into palcos—or boxes—draped with gay hangings and fluttering with paper fans and sunshades, red, yellow and green, behind which were hiding a myriad black eyes; the lower gallerywhere they now stood—contained three tiers of seats, and Ray's ticket directed her to the lowest, where only a light wooden railing divided her from the sombreros below.

"You see," said Peter, "it's just on the edge of the sol, so it may be rather warm for a while; but the sombra will reach it as the sun drops lower, and meanwhile you must have one of these paper abanicos." He pursued an itinerant vender around the

corridor and came back with a sunburst of orange and scarlet. "This is hardly becoming to the American complexion," he regretted, "but all of the others were magenta and green."

"Never mind; it will illuminate me like a stained glass window, so my natural coloring won't show in the least.—I like the looks of my neighbors," she added in an undertone. "Bourgeois, but very respect-

able."

"The swells sit on the shady side, you see, and all the hidalgos have their private palcos. That's the royal box up yonder, draped in the Spanish colors. I think only the Alcalde is there today. The King and Queen seldom come—Her Majesty wasn't born to the sport; but the Infanta Isabel is a great aficionada and tremendously popular in consequence; she was here last Sunday when Mazzantini received such an astounding ovation. That next box belongs to the Empresario of the Circus.—Ah! there's Mr. Stafford, just taking his seat below us.—You are sure you are not afraid to be left alone?"

"Not a bit," she returned mendaciously, and waved him off with a confident smile. He came back once more to bring her a program, and then took his own place among the crowd of men below, where she could speak to him by nods and smiles though her parasol-handle would hardly serve as a means of

communication.

The band, down by the barrier, was playing La vida en Madrid; her neighbors were chatting with loud-voiced jocularity: it was a festive hour to most, but Ray felt strangely forlorn and turned for con-

solation to her program. From this source she learned that the old and famous stock of his excellency Señor Don Eduardo Miura, of Seville, had furnished the six bulls for this occasion; a portrait of each one was engraved on the sheet, with name and description beneath. First appeared a huge black beast called Salerito, whose death was to be at the hands of the great Mazzantini; next came Jardinero, a bull with white and purple markings, doomed to fall by Reverte's sword; then Jabaito, a horned terror, reserved for "Bombita," the young favorite of Seville. The fourth, fifth and sixth bulls—Cucharito, Aceituno and Choricero—were apportioned to the same espadas, who would therefore have two opportunities each of winning plaudits from the fourteen thousand spectators now packed into the amphitheatre.

Ray dropped her program with a shudder. This individualizing of the doomed animals struck her as something sinister. She remembered how, in her childish days, a superfluous family of kittens had been saved from a watery grave by her assiduous christening of each unconscious ball of fluff—it being contrary to the ethics of the household to kill anything that had a name! A strong distaste for this cruel spectacle took possession of her, and she was wishing herself away when a loud trumpet note caused her to lean forward. The band struck up the paso-doble from the opera Cadiz, and a sudden hush

fell upon the great assemblage.

Into the arena rode the two heralds, in costumes of the sixteenth century; they saluted the royal box

and galloped out; another trumpet blared and they rode back again, followed by all the human combatants. The procession flashed across the sunlit zone like a bright hued comet with a prismatic, expanding tail. A key fell from the Alcalde's hand, a great door yawned blackly, a warning cry rang out—and the comet burst as Salerito entered. From his bleeding shoulder fluttered the barbed rosette that marked him for a cruel death. Sullen, majestic, he paced into the centre of the ring and halted.

Ray's face went white; her sympathies at that moment were all with the bull; she invested him with a superbestial dignity, and thrilled with indignation against the gold-laced, glittering swarm of human gad-flies that surrounded him. He stood there, pawing the yellow sand and gazing proudly on his would-be murderers. His sires, for generations, had been bred up for this same fate; surely he comprehended! And it must have touched his brute pride somewhat, that fourteen thousand humans had come there to see him die. Dumb he was; but in the toss of his huge head, in the swelling of his mighty throat as he glared up at the red hangings of the royal box, she read an Ave Cæsar!

A picador on a white horse rode forward to attack; Salerito shook his great head, lowered his shining horns and rushed to meet them. . . . A hoarse murmur ran around the barrier, applauding the bull as the horse went down, and Ray covered her eyes. Two more horses shared the same fate, banderilleros planted their cruel darts and the fluttering capas taunted the wounded victim; but, although the deep

roars of applause told her whenever blood was spilled, Ray saw none of it, she hid her face with the huge paper fan and hated herself for coming. Peter had quite forgotten her, he was so fascinated by the gorgeous color effects and the agility of the toreros that he had no glances to spare. Neither of them noticed when one of the men just outside of the gallery railing rose at a signal from a caballero seated further away and, after a whispered consultation, exchanged places with him. The newcomer was dressed in the extreme of fashion and wore a red carnation in his buttonhole.

But the first act of the bloody drama was drawing to an end and there was a new note in the plaudits as Mazzantini stepped into the arena. Ray uncovered her eyes for one look at the famous espada and, in spite of herself, watched the scene to its close. The bull's black hide was now gray with dust, the gaudy banderillas dangling from his shoulders swung to and fro with every motion of his head. His nostrils were spread and quivering, a defiant spirit looked out of his bloodshot eyes and his great bulk was convulsed by a sudden shiver as the espada advanced to meet him—a conspicuous figure in white and green and silver, carrying in its right hand an unsheathed sword concealed under the folds of a crimson flag. The little splash of angry color caught Salerito's eye and held it, he seemed to realize at once that this adversary alone was worth his notice. What followed was a duel to the death—but the result was a foregone conclusion. The American girl, choking down a sob, prayed that it might be over quickly.

From one stringent rule of tauromachia the natural inference would be that the bull had sometime bathed him in the river Styx, all but a tiny spot between the shoulders; for there, and nowhere else, must the espada plant his sword—and this feat can be performed only when the horns are lowered to Mazzantini was an artist in his way, but this happened to be one of his uninspired hours: when the moment came to make the thrust, his wrist or his eye must have failed him. There was a flash . . then a of naked steel in the sunlight capeador interposed with a fluttering yellow cloak; for the espada stood there unarmed, and his Toledan blade was sticking upright in the spine of the maddened bull. A mighty shrug sent it flying through the air, and a murmur of disapproval ran around the A moment later, the man had amphitheatre. regained his weapon and renewed the contest; the thrust was made a second time with the same unsuccess, and the disapproval of the spectators became more audible. The laurels of a torero may wither in a day,—a third failure now roused the people to indignation! But although the thrice wounded animal was weakened by loss of blood and bellowing in his agony, he again rushed forward to meet his butcher; and, this time, the sword went home. There was no applause—only a sudden uproar of comment and criticism—and Mazzantini made an inglorious exit; so did Salerito, who was dragged away by a team of frisky mules while the chulos came in haste and raked over the crimsoned sand.

Ray leaned back in her seat with a shudder of cold disgust; in imagination, she followed that limp carcass to the butcher's stall outside—to the soup pots of the poor; and the arena, with all its glitter of gold and riot of color seemed no whit better than

any common shambles!

As the second bull came bellowing into the ring, she hastily lifted her fan-and beneath it saw, lying in her lap, a little twist of white paper wrapped round the stem of a red carnation. Whence had it come? from whom and with what intent? Her immediate neighbors—both women—were apparently unconscious of her very existence; the man who sat behind was accompanied by his wife and two blooming daughters; -could any one have thrown it through the railing in front? The paper, on closer inspection, appeared to have writing upon it, and Ray-being a true daughter of Eve - unfolded it with some curiosity; it was scribbled over in pencil in a fine running hand and signed by initials only, but her own name at the commencement was written out in full.

"To the very honorable señorita, Doña Reina Woodward.

"Much esteemed señorita:-

Circumstances—the nature of which I cannot now explain—have lately arisen which compel me to address to you this note; but I do so in a spirit of deep respect. I have a proposition to make, with your gracious permission, compliance with which would greatly advantage you. For your own sake, therefore, I entreat you to hear me further, and to

signify your willingness to do so by wearing this flower—if only for five minutes. I am watching you now. And I have the honor to be

"S. S. Q. B. S. P.
"T. de S."

Confused somewhat by the number of initials (the first six of which were a customary abbreviation of the polite formula: Su servidor que besa sus pies—Your servant who kisses your feet) Ray failed to divine the writer until after she had read the note; then she hastily lifted her eyes and recognized her "bête noire" in the man who was standing up in the first row of seats below the balcony and staring at her over the railing. She immediately tore the paper into fragments, brushing them, together with the flower, from her lap to the floor, and screened her indignant face behind the gaudy paper fan. When

she looked again, he had disappeared.

This little incident—or rather, the anger which it excited in her—was quite stimulating in its effect: it brought the color back into her cheeks and checked the sensation of deadly sickness induced by the brutal performance in the ring. Not since the occasion that had caused her misunderstanding with Mr. Russell, had she encountered Teodoro until now; and, recalling the undisguised contempt with which she had eventually shaken him off, she marveled at his presumption in again addressing her. The longer she pondered over it, the more she condemned herself for coming to a place like this unchaperoned; for, in spite of Peter's propinquity, her isolation must invite

such approaches. Regarding this merely as a piece of impertinence, she attached no importance to the note's mysterious wording—which suggested the Personals in a newspaper agony column—but the darkening of the man's brow as she threw the flower away, his strange look of bafflement, puzzled her considerably.

She was startled from her revery by a burst of shouts and cheers. Her neighbors were leaning forward in their seats, and down among the sombreros there was a flurry of excitement: Jardinero, the second bull, had leaped the inner barrier. He raced round the narrow way between the wooden fence and the wall of stone and, through a quickly opened gate, charged back into the arena. All the cheering was for him; he had killed five horses, throwing one picador severely, and had missed only by a hair's breadth a fleeing capeador, who was dragged over the second barrier by his friends outside. Now, there was something leonine in his attitude as, with head erect and waving tail, he held the centre of the ring. Despite the desperate fight he had been making, he was still unwearied; the espada would find in him no gentle antagonist and a failure like his predecessor's might cost him his life. This was quite evident to the spectators, and a thrill of apprehension ran through them as a lithe, debonair young fellow, in orange and gold, gracefully saluted the royal box and sauntered out toward the bull. All the capas rallied to his defense, but he airily waved them off—this was his little private affair with Jardinero! The angry beast shook his claret colored head and

charged at once, but Reverte nimbly skipped aside with a flirt of the red muleta. Agile as an acrobat and graceful as a dancer, his slim young figure brightly defined by the gleam of gold fringe and the glistening of spangles, he was like an embodied sunbeam flitting over the yellow sand. Round and round went the pair in an ever narrowing circle, never far apart and often face to face, the bull charging in sudden rushes and Reverte to all appearances dancing a pavana.

The audience went wild with delight. And Ray leaned forward, spellbound, the sinister character of the performance entirely forgotten. Her eyes were riveted on the young espada as he passed and repassed in front of his terrible partner, his white silk stockings flashing within a few inches of the cruel horns, his sword still sheathed in the crimson flag. Her brain reeled with bewilderment. Was this a bull fight—or some strange masquerade performed

in jest?

Suddenly, in the midst of a breathless hush, Reverte threw up his right arm with the naked, gleaming blade, and stood motionless in the very path of his assailant. A shuddering sigh ran round the barrier. Then—oh! then—with the bright curve of a leaping fish above the wave—that gilded figure sprung! And the great bulk of the charging bull crumpled down in a purple heap: death had been instantaneous, for the sword between the shoulder blades was buried to the hilt.

The serried ranks of the spectators rose as with one impulse and a deafening thunderburst of plaudits shook the vast building to its foundations. The palcos blossomed white with waving handkerchiefs, and a hail of black sombreros and cigars descended on the yellow sand. Smiling, bowing, with the same debonair grace and ease, Reverte made the tour of the arena, acknowledging the applause and tossing back the hats of his admirers—it is for such moments that the torero lives!-not even the King of Spain was a greater now than he. The sombreros were still dropping into the ring, and the enthusiasm of the aficionados still venting itself in occasional cheers, when Jabaito came roaring through the gateway. Reverte swung himself lightly over the barrier; but a picador, riding in from the opposite side, had no time to wheel his horse, which reared directly over the fearful horns and fell in a horrid collision.

A white faced girl in the gallery shrank away from the railing, burst into tears and fled sobbing up the narrow steps that led to the corridor behind. Her hasty exit naturally created a slight sensation; curious eyes followed her, necks were craned and a few people rose in their seats. The ripple of disturbance ran over the intangible line dividing the sol from the sombra, where a group of four foreigners recognized her immediately. One of them started to his feet and hurried out in pursuit. He found her leaning against the wall of the deserted corridor, wringing her small hands and struggling desperately with her sobs. She evinced no surprise at his approach and, with a simple confidence that touched and thrilled him, lifted her tearstained face and abandoned one hand to his keeping. For a moment, his sympathy was as inarticulate as her distress; but when she withdrew from him, in a resolute effort to regain her self control, he indignantly demanded:

"Who brought you here and then left you to face

this ordeal alone?"

"Nobody," was the smothered reply. "At least, it was all my own fault—I didn't realize what it would be! Peter's here, and Mr. Stafford; their seats are down below; I don't suppose they saw me coming out.—But the dreadful, dreadful thing, Mr. Russell, is that—that—five minutes ago I was enjoying it!" Her voice broke piteously, but she dashed away the tears. "I was so fascinated by the daring—the beautiful, wicked grace of that young espada—that I forgot the cruelty, the unfairness! I forgot to be sorry for the poor bulls and the wretched horses, who had no choice but to-oh!- Perhaps, had I lived two thousand years ago, I could have borne to see man pitted against man! I might even have turned my thumb and cried Habet like any other! Think of my standing up just now and cheering! But I hadn't the least idea I was doing it-I didn't know what I was doing."

"Well!" exclaimed Russell, responding to the appeal in her eyes, "you certainly are not letting that trouble you! Why, you might just as well blame an Æolian harp for shrieking in a tempest. But this is no fit place for any woman. Let me take you home. I mean—" and he gently smiled, "to the Calle

Mayor."

"I'd be so glad to go," she was saying, shyly, gratefully, when an untoward fate in the person of

Dr. Hazeldean interrupted them. His mission was to summon back Mrs. Dering's recreant escort and to offer his own services to Miss Woodward; his sister was anxious to leave, having had quite enough of the performance, but Mrs Dering was determined to sit it out to the end. Something very like exasperation flashed over Russell's face; then he yielded calmly to the inevitable and took leave of Ray, promising to signal an explanation to Peter, little as that young man deserved it. Miss Hazeldean soon joined them, looking pale and subdued.

"Is this your first bull fight?" she inquired. "How dreadful it must have been for you, all by yourself! I had Ernest and Mr. Russell to tell me when not to look—but one can't help seeing some things—though the chulos are marvelously quick! Isn't Mrs. Dering wonderful? She's watching it all, just to see how it will affect her—a psychological experiment,

she says!"

"I don't approve of such experiments for women," was the Doctor's blunt comment as they left the building together, "and I'm inclined to think she will

suffer from it physically."

Ray was of the same opinion, for her own head was aching and she felt weak and giddy; the drive back through the fresh air revived her somewhat, but the unpleasant sensations returned as she climbed the interminable stairs, and she went ill and dinnerless to bed.

But her overstimulated imagination permitted her no rest. The whole night long, that circle of sunlit sand was projected on the blackness of her ceiling, and there she saw again, in a series of dissolving views, all the horrors of the afternoon's drama. Toward daylight she fell into an uneasy doze from which she awoke with a blinding headache. Dolores came to her, full of sympathy, bringing a fragrant decoction of herbs—vastly better, she said, than all the unpalatable stuff of the *medicos!* Swallowing this like a docile child, Ray soon dropped off into a quiet sleep.

When she next opened her eyes, refreshed and out of pain, the sunlight had already left her window. Dressing quickly, she sallied out into the comedor, where the clock informed her that it was half-past

two.

Benita was overjoyed at her reappearance and proceeded at once to set forth an appetizing lunch. "Señor Rosail was here at noon," she announced with the most innocent of smiles. "He was much afflicted to hear of the señorita's indisposition and left a thousand expressions of his sympathy. Also, he bade me tell the señorita—" continued the little maid, going out for a fresh plate and returning after a tantalizing interval, "that tomorrow he would do himself the honor of calling on her again."

CHAPTER XXVII

This conjunction of fiestas, processions and bull fights had proven more or less demoralizing to all the business of Madrid: shops were opened and closed at irregular hours, and officials were seldom to be found at their posts. But three whole days of idleness would have been impossible to the very poor, whose living must always be from hand to mouth. The great tribe of street venders, especially, did a considerable business, between whiles, in Dos de Mayo souvenirs, paper fans and sunshades, newspapers, flowers, cooling drinks-and the thousand and one other tricks and wiles by which they conjure perrachicas out of richer pockets into their own. Monday morning early, the Puerta del Sol was alive with them; they swarmed over the square, they waited on the street corners, they guarded all the avenues of approach; from every doorway, from behind every lamp post, they darted out and assailed the passer-by with shrill-voiced, good-humored pertinacity, until the very hour of the procession, when they simultaneously disappeared, like chaff before the wind.

The rogativa began at ten o'clock in the cathedralchurch in the Calle de Toledo. Thitherward flocked as much of the population as the narrow streets in that quarter could accommodate; the Plaza Mayor was teeming for hours before; it was with difficulty that the police contrived to keep open a passageway for the procession itself—in which church and state were to be alike represented. From the Palacio Real came the royal cortège, the Queen in a carriage drawn by milk white horses, and his young majesty, Alphonso, riding beside it on his pony, while their excellencies, the Alcalde and the Gobernador Civil, followed behind with numbers of the court. From all the churches of the city came priests and deacons and acolytes and all manner of ecclesiastical functionaries. From other quarters arrived various religious and civil organizations, till the street could hold no more.

The people pressed in as far as they durst, and gathered on the sidewalks all along the line of march, waiting there for hours; some laughing and chatting of worldly affairs, some eager and curious, some reverent and hopeful, some a little touched with awe. Every class and condition was to be seen, from the well-to-do city merchant to the swarthy laborer of some outlying farm, differing widely in dress and speech and manner but alike in their common dependence on the bounty of Nature for a livelihood.

Within the church of San Isidro, mass was being celebrated and the litany chanted; through the open doorway floated the voices of priest and choir, and the crowd outside bowed their heads and joined in the responses. "Domine, qui operit coelum nubibus, qui producit in montibus fœnum . . . Da

pluviam terræ . . . et herbam servituti hominum." . . . And all the while the rich notes of the organ rolled on in solemn undertone.

Then, with a sudden gleam of candle-light on white and purple vestments, the sacred casket was brought forth. A low murmur ran through the waiting throng; somewhere among them a man's deep voice pronounced the name of San Isidro, and all around him the people responded, "Ora pro nobis!" Those further away took up the cry and there was a sudden swaying and commotion that rippled onward to the outer limits of the multitude, and men and women crossed themselves as the procession began to move.

The day had dawned as clear and bright as any in the three preceding months, but in the past hour the blue overhead had paled to a softer tone and there was a chastened glory in the sunshine; as the morning wore away, a thin veil seemed to float across the heavens and the sun at noon hung like a red ball in a golden mist. Beneath it, the long procession moved serpent-like upon its way, winding slowly and tenuously through the narrower streets, spreading wider in the open plazas, absorbing into itself the waiting crowds upon the sidewalks, and growing ever longer and longer till its living coils were wrapped about the city.

From the windows of their hotel on the Puerta del Sol, Mrs. Dering and her friends had watched it trailing its interminable length across the square; but before the final extremity had passed them, the head with the precious casket—its crown jewel—must have circled back to the church whence it

started; for, about half-past one o'clock, the whole formation began to disintegrate, and in the course of another half hour nothing remained but a chaotic mass of men, women and children, homeward-bound

and very hungry.

By this time, the thickening veil of mist had completely obscured the sun, and the air was so damp and chilly that Russell, who was just setting out to pay his farewell call in the Calle Mayor, decided that he would carry an umbrella. His anticipations were evidently shared by those without, for many of the returning pilgrims walked along with faces upturned to the sombre skies. On the opposite corner, two blue-coated guardias were struggling with a sunbrowned tatterdemalion who appeared desirous of continuing, in the uncouth fashion of his native village, a rogativa of his own; he wore a heavy coil of rusted chain twisted about his neck and shoulders, and in a frenzy born of religious enthusiasm-or some as potent but profaner spirit—was beating his head and breast and crying aloud to the misty heavens for rain, rain, rain and pardon for his sins! It might have been a survival of the old Baal-worship, so grotesque did it seem in a Christian city of The hoarse outcries could be heard long after his custodians had hustled him down the street: "Agua, San Isidro! Agua-agua!"

Russell was still gazing after them in protestant aloofness when a familiar voice at his elbow accosted him with brusque unceremony.

"Say-is Miss Ray lunching at the hotel?"

"Why, no! Isn't she at home? I'm on my way there now."

"Hasn't she been at the hotel this morning? Hasn't Mrs. Dering seen her—or Miss Gladys—or any of them?"

"If they had, I must have known it; for I have been in their company for the past three hours. But you don't mean to tell me that she's—missing!"

"That's just what I do mean! She went out early this morning, and we thought perhaps she'd been cut off by the procession or was watching it from the hotel; but if you haven't seen her—Great Scott! where can she be?"

Russell made no answer; to his mind an unwelcome suspicion had immediately presented itself: Ray knew of his intended visit and had chosen deliberately to avoid him. It was not a thought that he could possibly share; so, for the moment, he kept silence. Impatient of his unresponsiveness, his companion turned away from him to scan, with anxious blue eyes, the heterogeneous crowd of disbanded supplicants swarming over the Puerta del Sol. Presently, Russell inquired, "Does the señora seem anxious?"

Peter shrugged dubiously. "Fact is," he said, "we didn't miss her till lunch—everybody thinking she was with somebody else; then, when she didn't turn up, we felt sure she was with the ladies of your party. But knowing Miss Ray's marvelous propensity for getting into scrapes, I thought I'd better come over and see."

"Could she have followed the procession? The pressure of the crowd might have taken her along

in spite of herself."

"Hardly; it wasn't like a mob," contended Peter. "At any street corner she could easily have dropped out. I think I'll inquire at Cook's, if their office is open; she might have gone there for letters or money.—Well, this is good-bye, I suppose. You

are off on the evening train?"

Russell glanced at his watch. "That depends. It is now ten minutes after two; if Miss Woodward hasn't returned at the end of the next hour, my departure is indefinitely postponed. I should like to interview Dolores; you'll find me there on your return—and if you bring us no news, we must organize a search party at once."

"Now you are talking!" applauded the other, while the shadow lifted from his smooth young forehead. "Be with you again in fifteen minutes," and

he swung away at a brisk pace up the avenue.

With a lover's natural egotism, Russell clung obstinately to his first idea until he saw the blank disappointment on Benita's countenance as she hastily answered his ring; the same expression was legible on the faces in the comedor, where Dolores, the Staffords and Don Francisco were still lingering around the uncleared table. So far, their anxiety had been unconfessed; but, as Russell disclaimed any knowledge of Ray's movements, they exchanged furtive glances of dismay, and Mrs. Stafford interjected numberless vague and inadequate hypotheses which were set aside one after another by her husband.

"Considering that we have given up the studio, that the Museum is closed for the day, that no shops have been open since ten o'clock and that Miss Ray has no other acquaintances in Madrid with whom she could have spent the entire morning, her absence is inexplicable to me," said Mr. Stafford. "And I agree with Mr. Russell that, if Peter brings us no news of her, we must institute a search—though

where to begin it, I haven't the least idea."

Don Francisco moved uneasily in his seat and twisted the curled tips of his sable mustaches; his little black eyes were dilated with worried bewilderment; he opened his lips to speak, hesitated and sighed heavily instead. Russell inquired if Ray had made any mention of her errand, and receiving no answer demanded who had seen her leave the house. Dolores explained that Benita had opened the door for her, and the little maid then volunteered her opinion that the señorita had carried a letter to post. At this point, Peter's step was heard in the hall, and all eyes were turned on him as he came dejectedly in.

"They don't know a blessed thing," he sighed, dropping into a chair. "She hasn't been there since last week. But I got one piece of information that bothers me a good deal. You all know that Miss Ray has sold her portrait—" and he looked inquiringly at Russell, who said, without any allusion to his own unbounded surprise, that he had already heard so from Mrs. Dering. "Well, a few days ago, Miss Ray cashed that check at Cook's and took it all—a trifle over three hundred duros—in *Spanish* notes. Now why did she do that when tomorrow we are leaving Spain? She couldn't have blown in

all of it already—at least, she isn't given to that sort of thing. There's only one place that ever tempts her to a mild extravagance, and that is—the Rastro."

Mr. Stafford and Russell exchanged glances and the latter rose from his seat. "Would she have gone down there alone with that amount on her person?"

"It's a question," said Peter. "I see you don't fancy the notion any more than I did. The honesty of that quarter is by no means above suspicion—and Miss Ray is as trustful as a six-year-old child!" He struck the table by way of emphasis; and Dolores, who had been listening blankly to his report, appealed to Russell for a translation. As he briefly explained, a swift change convulsed her features and she lifted one hand to her throat.

"Have no fear of that, señores," she cried huskily, shaking her head. "Have no fear of that! The señorita never carried that money to the Rastro, for she no longer had it to spend. She herself would never be willing to tell what became of those three hundred duros, but it is fitting—it is only right that

you should hear.

"Your honors know that I am a widow, but I think only Don Francisco is aware that I have a brother living. He owns a little farm just outside of Seville. That farm was our whole patrimony; but when I married, José—my husband—resigned all my rights forever to Pablo and my younger sister, and Pablo mortgaged the farm to pay off my sister's portion. But all that is of no consequence—only, when my brother also married and his first child was born, they named the boy José, after my husband.

That was seventeen years ago. Pablo has always been unfortunate; he is poorer now than he was then -poorer in everything but children! And, welcome as each of those little ones would be to empty arms in a silent house, they are held as doubtful blessings when there is no money to put food into their mouths or shoes upon their feet. I sometimes think"-and the señora's eyes wandered to Mrs. Stafford's face-"that if the Holy Mother were permitted, she would arrange these things in a different way. Well, to poor Pablo's misfortunes has been added, this winter, a crippled leg; so there is no one but the lad José to work the farm and make bread for that growing family. It has been a hard spring, too, with the fields drying up—Ah! but see! Blessed be San Isidro, for the rain has come at last!" She pointed to the window and, sure enough, a faint, light mist was drifting downward, scarcely enough to fog the panes.

"If it falls any harder before night, it will be a first class nineteeth century miracle," murmured Peter in English. "But why the efficiency of the good Saint should be limited to such times as his poor old bones are being trotted around the streets is

something that passes my comprehension!"

Russell made a slight movement of impatience. "You had something more to tell us, señora," he gently reminded her—though by now he thought he could divine the rest.

"Si, señor, I have to tell you of the crowning sorrow that came to us not much more than a week ago. It was on Wednesday that I received the letter saying that José, our little lad—only seventeen yet already doing a man's part, our hope and comfort, the staff of our old age, little José—had been drawn in the last

conscription!"

Now it was to Francisco that her eyes appealed, to Francisco, who for the last six months had been dressing into shape "the raw material from the provinces;" who knew to the full all their piteous ineptitude and the vain efforts made for their release by sweethearts and wives, dependent mothers and sisters; to Francisco, who had seen them march away by the thousand, and who was soon to follow them himself. "Ah-h!" he exclaimed, and gravely shook his head. "There is nothing to be done, señora, unless—"

"Listen!" cried Dolores, while two bright tears ran down her cheeks unheeded. "I, too, thought there was nothing to be done,—for where could I raise the money for a substitute? Not one duro of my savings left in the bank and my house soon to be empty! I was sitting out there in the hall, weeping for very hopelessness, when the señorita came in and found me. Down upon her knees she fell, and took my head between her hands. 'Madre,' she said, 'tell me your trouble!' And when I had done so she laughed aloud—a low soft peal of joy. 'Be comforted!' she said, 'José—our José—shall never go to Cuba, for your daughter can give you the three hundred duros!'"

There was a silence as the señora finished, a silence that no one cared to break. She had told her story very simply, but toward the last her tone had fairly rung with pride.—Just such pride as is heard in the tender voice of many a happy mother when some treasured trifle, the earliest tribute of a child's affection, is displayed to privileged and sympathetic eyes, and she says, as she unfolds the bungled work of the baby's fingers or points to the first fruits of her boy's loving self denial, "My little son—or my little daughter—gave it to me!" And this gift of which Dolores boasted, for the first time in all her childless years, was in itself a precious thing.—But even as she proclaimed it, she remembered the absence of the giver; her voice failed in a sob and she covered her face with her brown old hands.

Presently Russell bent over her and spoke in an undertone, and together the two went out through the yellow portières. Mrs. Stafford wiped her eyes with furtive dabs of her handkerchief and Peter, under his breath, softly whistled a tune. It is characteristic of very young men, when their feelings are touched and words are lacking, that they find it easier

to whistle than to keep silence.

The young lieutenant pushed back his chair, and fell into an attitude before the window; but under all his affectations he, too, was sincerely moved. Moreover, he was filled with a vague alarm, with suspicions that he had no right to share. Never in all his life had his commonplace but honest soul been vexed by so subtle a problem. "The honor of a gentleman and a soldier" had heretofore been his touchstone; but now he found his honor and his chivalry at odds. He glanced over his shoulder. Behind him, the three artists were deep in a murmured confer-

ence. This was his opportunity. If he lingered another moment, he might be tempted beyond his

strength.

"Hello!" exclaimed Peter, looking up as the hall door clicked. "Well, I call that very shabby of Francisco; he might at least have offered his advice before he left!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

Three o'clock had already struck, and Russell and Peter were again crossing the Puerta del Sol. Mr. Stafford had gone to the American Legation for advice and assistance; but the two younger men, impatient of red tape and official deliberation, had at once begun the search by following up Benita's clue. It had led them across the street to a tobacconist's shop—which, supplying as it did the necessaries of life, had thriftily opened its doors—and there they had learned that before nine that morning the senorita had weighed, stamped and posted a letter. Further than this, the proprietor could tell them nothing; so they had left the shop, as much at sea as before, and now were adrift without even the compass of conjecture. It is true that Russell had discovered, during his conversation with the señora, that she at least had a positive suspicion; he knew whither it tended but remained uninfluenced himself. Dolores — he thought—was always prone to consider everything from the romantic side; but the casual persecutions of Silvela had not indicated that he was very much in love: as a possible agent in Ray's disappearance, he was still negligible,—like the down-drifting mist, which was unopposed as yet by a single umbrella.

In the gray light the square wore a forlorn and deserted aspect; the crowd had disappeared, and the

few remaining pedestrians were easy prey for such of the beggars and street venders as had now returned to their haunts. Ignoring patiently many assaults from these gentry, the two Americans finally came to a pause beside a lamp-post; there, as they were exchanging a few last words of advice before starting on separate lines of inquiry, a saucy blackeyed newsgirl slipped a paper into Peter's coat pocket and held out a beguiling hand.

"Give you good afternoon, señor mio! Ten centi-

mos, if you please."

Being in no mood for badinage—although this was no other than the ex-pin-seller who had furnished Ray with so many jokes at his expense—Peter fumbled for the coin without a word.

The little Spaniard eyed him with mournful coquetry. "Is it true that my señorito is going away tomorrow?"

"Who told you so, Manuela?" he demanded, offering her a silver coin which she slipped between her milk-white teeth as she counted out his change from a kerchief full of coppers.

"Your honor never did," was the indistinct

reproach, "but the señorita said so this morning."
"When?" cried the young man, seizing her arm.

"Here, Russell! Come back a minute — this girl knows something. This morning, querida? What time? Where? Oh! deuce take the change—quédese con la vuelta—I don't want it. Just answer my question. Donde esta—estaba— Oh, thunder! Russell, you talk. I can't think of the fool jargon."

"What ails him?" gasped Manuela, dropping the coin from her lips like the gifted maiden of the fairy tale; it spun musically on the pavement and clinked to rest at Russell's feet. He quietly picked it up and restored it, saw the dingy kerchief knotted securely and deposited in the pocket of the owner; then, with skillful questioning, he extracted all she knew.

Her encounter with Ray had taken place on this very square, before the passage of the rogativa; the exact time was indeterminable, but as the newsgirl was sure that she herself had left the Puerta del Sol before the big clock on the building of the Ministerio de Gobernacion said half-past nine, it must have been previous to that hour. The señorita, it seemed, was not a regular patron; but this morning she had bought a paper, inquired if business was steady and wished the young vender good luck and goodbye. While she was still talking, a gentleman had accosted her-"un caballero de tono," said the Spanish girl, with a flower in his buttonhole and a beautiful slender cane; and the señorita had been just as blind and deaf to his presence as if a cross old duenna kept watch; nevertheless, he had bided his time and had followed her as she walked away.

"In what direction?" Russell asked.

The newsgirl paused to consider. "I was standing over yonder, caballero, and the señorita went around the corner with the *lechuguino* a few paces behind—Oh! I swear to your soul he was a popinjay!" she asseverated, in the relishing phraseology of the *gente comun*; then, dumping her bundle of papers against the side of the big lamp-post, she seized upon Rus-

sell's umbrella, twirled it airily in her slim brown fingers, cocked her pretty head on one side, winked a sloe-black eye and strutted up the sidewalk in roguish

and unmistakable mimicry.

Peter grinned in spite of himself; for, beneath the inbred grace of the little olive-skinned damsel, he detected an impudence that was closely akin to the "cheek" of her co-professionals over the water. But the humorous side of the performance was altogether lost upon Russell, who thought he recognized the impersonation; his level brows drew together in a worried frown as he turned to his companion.

"Did Miss Woodward ever tell you anything

about Silvela?"

"Who?" asked Peter.

"The man who spoke to her on the afternoon of Holy Thursday—her Carnival admirer."

"Oh, that fellow!" cried Peter. "Why, you cer-

tainly don't suspect her of encouraging such a-"

"Encouraging! Well, no—but evidently you are not in possession of all the facts." He hesitated, and as the newsgirl had come back to them, dismissed her with another piece of silver and an injunction to keep her eyes and ears open if she wanted to earn more. "Now Peter," said he, "I want you to understand, first and foremost, that my interest in Miss Woodward springs from something deeper than mere friendship. I would be the last one in this world—"he declared, forgetting, as men ever do!—"to entertain a doubt of her maidenly dignity. And although I have little reason to hope that she cares for me, I'm not such a fool as to be jealous of a fellow like Silvela."

Peter nodded, blushing in sheer sympathy. "Skip all that," he said, "and come to business. I guess I know both of you too well to need much explanation. Who is this Silvela—and what do you really suspect?"

It was a long story and the telling of it consumed many minutes, but when Russell had summed up the evidence the other shook his head. "I don't see that you've got any case," he contended. "The man may have spoken to her again this morning, but she was within a block of her own door and, if he annoyed her, she could have easily shaken him off. To tell you the truth, I don't think Manuela's information is worth any more than the tobacconist's. We want news of a later date—she's been missing now for more than six hours. I haven't much faith in the Madrid police, but I'm blest if I don't think we'd better apply to 'em."

"You may, if you like; but I'm going to interview that Spaniard. At least he can give me later infor-

mation than the newsgirl's."

"That's so," Peter granted, "but I wouldn't let him see that you think he knows more than he ought."

"Of course not; that would be tantamount to saying—Sir, I think you are a scoundrel! and I have no adequate grounds for such a charge. I'll apply to him just as one gentleman would to any other for what news he can give me of a common acquaintance."

Before carrying out this resolution, however, Russell returned to his hotel and explained to Mrs. Dering the cause of his detention in Madrid. If his

reasons for considering himself necessary to the search appeared less cogent to her than they did to him, she never betrayed the fact. Indeed, she professed a perfect willingness to wait over another day so that her courier might also be pressed into service. But Russell strongly advised against this: there was no knowing yet, he said, how things would turn out; if Miss Woodward had met with any accident, she might be unfit to travel for days-or even weeks. Dr. Hazeldean, unfortunately, had an appointment in Paris; his immediate departure was imperative, and his mother and sister would of course accompany him. And, after a prolonged discussion, Mrs. Dering finally decided to carry out her original programfor the sake of Aunt Elizabeth, who of late had been quite ailing and was very dependent on the Doctor's attentions. So the goodbyes were spoken—a little hastily, perhaps—and then Russell betook himself to the Café Fornos to ask for Silvela's address, which he obtained without difficulty. It proved to be in the neighborhood of the Plaza San Domingo-where Ray had encountered the mascaron on that Carnival Sunday—and although it was within easy walking distance, time now was precious, so Russell hailed a passing cab and urged the cochero to his best speed.

The Silvela mansion was significant of the family traits and fortunes. It stood upon a corner—a huge, square, rough-cast brick building with a plaster coat of arms displayed over the door; the walls had at some time been colored a deep Pompeian red, but in many places now the surface was mildewed and the paint was scaling; the simulated granite cornices and

window copings had evidently been the master work of some artist house-painter, for wherever intact they would still have deceived the eye, had not the cracked and crumbling plaster here and there made very manifest the cheap expedient. Earlier generations of Silvelas had always had their entrances and exits beneath the family escutcheon and through the wide hall with its winding stairway of black, timepolished oak; but the vices of the present representative of the elder line and the failings of his father before him had shut them out from the privileges of that portal. The lace curtains now hanging at the balconied windows of the first piso belonged to a respectable merchant who could boast more pesetas than pedigree; and Teodoro lived, where his father had died, on an upper floor that had formerly served the retainers of the household. It was reached through a side entrance and—at seasonable hours by a hydraulic lift; but as the habits of the gay young Don seldom allowed him to avail himself of that modern amelioration, every midnight he found his way with difficulty up a long flight of narrow crooked stairs.

Russell, however, was spared that discomfort as the elevator was running; it carried him up to the fourth piso and left him on a dark landing before a heavy door at which he rung twice without receiving any response. At last appeared a discreet manservant, whose flushed countenance might have been owing to an undue haste in the assumption of his coat, and the visitor was ushered into a comfortable apartment that, in essentials, resembled too many

bachelor sanctums to require a close description. In such things, however, as create the distinctive atmosphere of a room, it betrayed the characteristics of the owner. There was in all the furnishings—which had doubtless begun their term of service on the lower piso—a curious mingling of genuine excellence and good taste with ostentation, sham and shabbiness. One felt instinctively that a decaying fortune was not sufficient to account for this; the suspicion arose that, at some time in its history, a coarser and less honest shoot had been grafted upon the family tree. Such, indeed, was the case: and Teodoro was a twig of that spurious limb; while Don Enrique, though he came of a younger branch, had far more of the true fibre of his noble ancestry.

The discreet manservant departed with the visitor's card, and Russell walked over to one of the tall
front windows and waited there with his arms
behind him, his eyes on the street without. In his
mind was rankling the memory of the Spaniard's
unrebuked impertinence to Ray. It was her own
action that afternoon that had hitherto tied his hands,
but now that he was under the man's roof he felt
his anger rising hot within him and the barriers of
his self-control breaking down. Common sense told
him, however, that this was no time to pick a quarrel;
the questions he had to ask must be put with civility.

After an appreciable interval, a door opened on his left; he turned sharply and perceived Silvela standing on the threshold, scrutinizing the bit of paste-

board in his hand. The American quietly waited. At last, with a blended insolence and grace, the other came toward him.

"Caballero Ro-sail? I kiss your hand."

Never before had the ceremonious compliment grated so on Russell's ear, and his own reply, despite its formal phrasing, rung with impatience. "Don Teodoro de Silvela may remember that through the introduction of Miss Woodward I have the honor of his acquaintance."

The Spaniard lifted his black brows and smiled, a distinctly unpleasant smile. "He also remembers, caballero, that at the time of the introduction Señor Rosail did not appear to be highly sensible of the honor."

This was so true that Russell bit his lip. "I deeply regret having lost that opportunity of making clear to Señor de Silvela the exact degree of my esteem for him," was his ambiguous apology. "My excuse must be that I knew less of his character then than I do now."

"May I inquire the source of Señor Rosail's further enlightenment?"

"No, caballero, you may not."

"Then, perhaps I may ask to what I am indebted for this visit."

"To be perfectly candid with you, you owe it entirely to the uneasiness of Miss Woodward's friends. She has been missing since nine o'clock this morning and the last person seen with her happens to be yourself." "Indeed! And who was your informant? It would seem that the person who saw us both would be as competent to relieve your uneasiness as I."

"Hardly," disputed Russell, "my informant being only a little newspaper vender on the Puerta del Sol. Miss Woodward was buying a paper when you addressed her and, although her reception of you must have been far from encouraging, you followed her around the corner and out of sight." The speaker's tongue had slipped its bonds, but now as he went on he forced a more conciliatory tone. "If you can throw any light on her movements after that, caballero—if you can tell us when and where you parted from her, it would greatly facilitate our search."

The Spaniard eyed his visitor meaningly. "How do I know that I would be doing the señorita a service? She may have her own reasons for wishing to disappear."

"Repeat that," threatened Russell, "and you'll

repent it!"

"A hundred thousand pardons!" cried Teodoro, laughing softly; he always experienced a keen satisfaction in making other people lose their tempers and would apologize a dozen times a day in order to repeat the offense. "I had no idea I was treading upon such delicate ground. Señor Rosail is doubtless the accepted suitor of his pretty country-woman?"

"That we are both Americans is enough. Do you —or do you not intend to answer my questions?"

So far they had both remained standing, but now Silvela with a friendly smile motioned his guest to a seat. As the belated courtesy was coldly declined, he shrugged his shoulders in mild protest and, propping himself gracefully against a chair, took out a cigarette and lit it before replying. "Isn't it a trifle unfair, caballero, to expect me to answer your questions when you refuse to answer mine? But I will not attempt to deny that I had this morning the pleasure of seeing and conversing with your-your countrywoman. I met her, as you have been truly informed, on the Puerta del Sol and-far from being discouraged—I was permitted to accompany her to the nearest glove shop, where we parted with mutual regret. But you look skeptical! Is it possible that you find it hard to accept this statement? My dear caballero, the little coquetries of our—our countrywomen are very apt to go on behind our backs as they do before our faces. One should never take them too deeply to heart!" He laughed again and blew a smoke wreath at a photograph on the opposite wall in which a lively soubrette of the Teatro de la Comedia liberally displayed "the neatest foot and ankle in Madrid."

"Be advised, amigo, and when one fair proves fickle, console yourself with . . . others."

The grim composure of Russell's countenance would have done credit to his Puritan forefathers; erect, rigid, his shoulders squared in military fashion, he looked down from his superior height on the easy lounging figure of the young Lothario and demanded simply: "Where is this glove shop—and in what direction did Miss Woodward go when you parted?"

"The shop is on the Calle del Arenal, we entered it together, the señorita made her purchase and bade me goodbye, I did not accompany her to the door for the reason that the pretty proprietress was then engaged in fitting a glove on my hand. I have no idea where your—countrywoman went afterward.

. . . But if she should ere long send me a message, caballero, it will give me great pleasure to

inform you."

At this last speech, a weaker character would have given way to resentment, but Russell was not to be diverted now from his first object. He bowed his adieu, was conducted to the stairway by the discreet servant, descended to the pavement, woke up his cochero and was driven at full speed toward the Arenal.

This is one of the many thoroughfares radiating from the Puerta del Sol, and is the nearest of all to the Calle Mayor, with which it forms an acute angle. At that point, Russell dismissed his cab and, following on foot the route indicated by the little newsgirl, discovered the glove shop a few doors from the corner. Its shutters were still up. But he identified it at once by the sign—a gilded pasteboard hand, bearing the legend, *C. Velasco. Guantes*.

Now that he had found it, the blank expression of those closed shutters mocked his impatience. He stepped backward and inspected the tall narrow building from its tiled roof down to the pavement: there were six stories, and all but the upper row of windows were closed. The shop, small as it seemed to be, occupied almost the entire front of the ground

floor; beside it was an open doorway, which doubtless afforded an entrance to the upper *pisos*. This must of course be in the charge of a portero, and Russell determined to find him.

The afternoon was now far spent, and the clouds had grown thick and heavy; even on the street the light was beginning to fail, and the obscurity of that narrow passage was such that, before he had gone in a dozen paces, he stumbled over an obstruction and would have fallen had he not thrown out a hand to save himself. What he caught hold of was a man's rough coat; the wearer was humped up in a low chair with one extended foot barring the passage. Here, evidently, was the portero, sound asleep. Russell seized his shoulders and energetically shook him, shouting at the same time in his ear; but all to no purpose. Finally, he struck a match, held it close to the other's face and lifted the battered felt hat that covered his brow: the light revealed a grizzled head, a stubby white beard, a flushed and wrinkled countenance and two bleared black eyes, half closed. The American stooped his own face lower and sniffed suspiciously.

"Pah!" he cried, shrinking away in disgust, "the

man is drunk!"

Nothing was to be elicited from such a source, so he returned to the street and wandered up and down the sidewalk in a hopeless quandary. To left and right of the glove shop were a jeweler's and a bakery; but the latter, only, was illuminated and open. Stepping inside, he accosted the plump, motherly woman behind the counter, who was busy at that moment

serving a customer with the odd little basket-shaped rolls peculiar to Spanish ovens. Into a paper bag she dropped them, counting aloud as she smiled across at the newcomer.

"Uno, dos, tres—perdóneme usté un momentito, caballero — cuatro, cinco . . . once, doce. Bien!" and she tossed the money into a drawer, folded her fat arms on the counter and inquired: "Now, how can I serve your honor?—not with any of my bread, I'll wager!"

There was something so kindly and honest in her face that Russell was moved to confide at least a part of his anxieties; she listened with round-eyed sympathy and readily gave him all the information in

her power.

The proprietress next door was Doña Carlota Velasco, a pretty young widow who retained with the business the name under which her husband had successfully established it. With her lived old Velasco, who held the post of portero to the building; he was a very worthless character and his daughter-inlaw had much ado to keep him sober. At ten o'clock this morning the glove shop, like all other places of business, must have closed for the rogativa; but until that hour the good woman had been doing such a steady trade herself that she had had no eyes for her neighbors, she couldn't even recall having seen the American señorita pass by. This afternoon, however, she had heard that Doña Carlota had just met with a serious accident, having fallen from a step-ladder as she was reaching to an upper shelf, and as she had no family to care for her properly, she

had gone away to a hospital "—though, Heaven knows, it is not what I should have done in her place!" cried the plump señora. "Far better to hire a neighbor's help and lie in one's own good bed than trust oneself to a parcel of doctors who can't cure a few bruises without first carving one up!—But to think that the moment the poor girl's back was turned old Velasco should have made a beast of himself! Well, if he should die of the drink before his daughter-in-law comes home, she will have little cause to regret him—and that is the blessed truth!"

So saying, she turned to welcome a new customer; and Russell, feeling that he was perhaps in the way, thanked her and withdrew. As he pushed open the glass doors he became vaguely aware that the pavement outside was spattered with raindrops; but no consequent idea suggesting itself, he wandered down the street in a drizzling shower, permeated by an unrecognized sense of physical discomfort—until a man brushed by him with an open umbrella. Then, mechanically, he raised his own.

CHAPTER XXIX

We must now look back ten hours or so, in order to determine how true was that testimony for which Russell was at such pains to find corroboration or

disproof.

At nine o'clock—when the sighs of the panting earth had just faintly misted the morning heavens, when the yellow sunshine was paling and the slant shadows were weakening and the gentle air first hinted of a coming change—Ray Woodward, walking rapidly round the corner of the Puerta del Sol, glanced across at the balconied front of a big hotel with eyes that were wide and wistful. She keenly regretted having missed Mr. Russell's visit on the preceding day, yet she quailed at the thought of another public leave-taking. She wondered at what hour he would call, and decided irritably that it would probably depend on Mrs. Dering's caprices; but no sooner had this suspicion formulated itself in her mind than she colored deeply, with a sudden sense of shame, and resolutely turned her eyes and thoughts away. A feverish restlessness had driven her from the house; but out here, alone, under the chastened sky, she was determined to regain her mental poise, to win back at least a temporary calm, for without these she dared not meet him. So she hurried on, undisturbed by the persistent street venders, to

whose attacks she had become habituated-it was second nature, now, to ask "pardon for God's sake" as she declined, with a shake of the head, matches, pins or a share in a lottery ticket; she lingered a moment, however, to buy a handful of lilacs from the old flower woman-who no longer had wild violets to sell, and then Manuela's smiling face invited a friendly greeting. The unexpected apparition of the "caballero de tono" ruffled her consciousness with a merely superficial resentment, he had no place in the deeper currents of her thought; and on parting with the newsgirl, she walked on toward the glove shop without realizing that he had followed. Perceiving this for the first time as she paused at the door, she opened it quickly and latched it carefully behind her. Then she bade good morning to Doña Carlota, who responded affably, with a quick gleam of white teeth between her full, pomgranite lips. This young Spanishwoman, although her features were decidedly heavy, was rather good to look upon on account of the richness of her coloring and the ripe curves of her plump figure; her eyes were fine and dark and longlashed, her dusky hair grew down in a peak on her narrow forehead, her black eyebrows curved archly and the glow on her smooth olive cheeks might have been rubbed in with the petals of a Jacqueminot rose.

Ray presented a slim hand for measurement,—she could never remember the size of her gloves and shoes by foreign computation,—and Doña Carlota had deftly encircled it with her ribbon when the shop door opened to admit a second customer. He was

evidently a favored one; for the proprietress chose at random a box from her shelves, uncovered it before the American girl, and then devoted her eyes and ears and hands to the service of Don Teodoro. He leaned on the counter at Ray's side, and as she inspected the box of gloves—all of which were in delicate evening shades—she felt her color slowly rising with annoyance. She knew, without looking, that his gaze was fastened upon her; his breath stirred the soft loose locks around her temple.

"Señorita!" he murmured.

She drew aside with icy dignity. "None of these will suit me, Doña Carlota. Have you nothing in fawn color—or tan?"

An indifferent response and a second hap-hazard choice from the shelves, another attempt on the part of the man to address her, and a sudden consciousness (born of that sixth sense which some women, most children and all animals possess) of a malevolent influence in the atmosphere, prompted Ray to withdraw immediately.

"When you are at leisure, señora, I will come back."

"The shop must close at ten!" cried the proprietress hastily.

"Bueno, I will be in time," and she closed the door behind her, drawing a long breath of relief in the free, fresh air outside. "I wonder—" she mused, "if that man's character is as noxious as I feel it! Don't tell me thoughts aren't things! I can see them buzzing, black and venomous, about his head!" Then, with something between a shrug and a shudder, she broke into a laugh at her own vehemence.

Farther up the street was a book store, to which she bent her steps in quest of some pleasant reading to alleviate the tedium of the long journey ahead of her. For the next half hour, she hung over piles of periodicals and, before making a selection, took into her confidence the friendly, gray-bearded, bright-eyed old salesman. In his opinion, the range of choice open to señoritas was very limited, and the only English novels on his shelves were much-too-familiar classics; but Ray finally compromised on *Pepita Jiménez*, a volume of the immortal *Tartarin's* adventures and a stray copy of *St. Nicholas*, and came away, well pleased.

Had it not been that all the leisured folk of the city were now directing their steps toward the church of San Isidro, so that the side streets were for the most part deserted, some one must have taken note of her as she hurried down the Arenal, at a quarter of ten o'clock, with her books clasped under her arm, the nodding lilacs tucked in her belt and a contented dimple still lurking about her lips. Arrived at the sign of the gilded hand, she found the door still unbarred, and to her first glance within, the shop seemed empty. Then, from behind the counter, came a low moan, a hysteric sob. Startled and concerned, she pressed forward and looked over.

On the floor, in an attitude expressive of intense suffering, lay Doña Carlota; beside her, was a fallen step ladder and an overturned box of gloves. She lifted a tearstained face and dumbly beckoned for assistance.

Ray dropped her books on the counter and hurried round behind. "What can I do for you!" she exclaimed, kneeling pitifully. "Are you very much hurt?"

Carlota moaned again, but her face revealed so much more of fright than of actual pain that Ray slipped one arm under the plump shoulders and lifted with all her strength; a shrill scream forced her to desist, and then the Spanishwoman gave way to a fresh fit of hysterics.

"What am I to do?" demanded the other, in deep perplexity. "I can't leave you thus, and you won't let me help you— Is there any one I can call?"

Immediately, Carlota's moans became articulate. She was sure her injuries were internal, she would have to be taken to a hospital; but only strong and skillful hands must attempt to lift her—or she would die of the pain! It would be necessary to send for an ambulance. Meanwhile, everything she had in the world would be left unprotected—and the Spaniards were such thieves! There was no one she could trust,—old Velasco was an infant, an incapable! But some one must look after the shop—and the money in the till—and all her clothing and jewelry and household possessions in the adjoining rooms. If the señorita would of her graciousness bring Señora Ruiz, she was very stupid but thoroughly honest, and might be trusted to lock things up.

"Why certainly!" cried Ray. "Where does she

live?—in the neighborhood?"

"Upstairs," sobbed Carlota, "on the sixth floor—what am I saying?—on the fifth floor, señorita—up four flights on the fifth floor. Ay de mi! Ay de mi! And she is very deaf, señorita,—oh, very deaf indeed! You must knock at the door and make a great noise, and ring and ring again until she hears. A very stupid person is Señora Ruiz—but honest, absolutely honest!"

"I will call her. But first, shall I send someone-

or telephone somewhere—for the ambulance?"

"No—no—no!" cried the glove dealer, wildly. "Think how helpless I am! At any moment I might be robbed—my stock is so valuable and so easily carried away. Ay de mi! and it will cost me a year's savings to get well again. Go, señorita—for the love of mercy!—go call Señora Ruiz!"

Ray started to her feet and pushing open the side door, pointed out by the other woman's tremulous finger, emerged on the dark passage from which the stairs ascended to the upper pisos. Although these gloomy entrance halls are a characteristic feature in the dwellings of Madrid, there are innumerable varieties of them and many degrees of gloom. Some are wide—others are narrow; some have walls of fresh, bright stucco-others are shut in by dingy, crumbling plaster; some are floored with wood or tiles or even marble—others are without any floor save mother Earth; some have elevators and easy, shallow stairs—others have steep, crooked, winding flights, down which it is easy to break one's neck; some are well kept and well ventilated-others are very dirty and the garlic smells to heaven! This was one of the others.

Up flight after flight, Ray mounted rapidly and paused, quite breathless, on the fourth narrow landing. There, repeatedly jerking the bell handle and detecting no consequent tinkle, she proceeded to batter the door with her two small fists, and was greatly astonished when, with a rusty creak, it swung inward. Evidently the deaf señora was at home to visitors. Feeling very like a burglar, Ray pushed on into the tiny hall. Just beyond the threshold was a small stone jug with a dingy tumbler inverted over its stopper; her skirts, as she hurried by, brushed the glass from its place and it rolled over on the uneven tiles. She stooped quickly to restore it and was relieved to find it quite undamaged. "If I must burgle," she softly laughed, "I'd like to do as little harm as possible."

This hall was windowless and darkly desolate; no sunshine ever found its way here, and no daylight but what filtered dimly through the transoms over the inner doors. There were three of these: she knocked at each in turn, calling gently and then clearly and then loudly for Señora Ruiz. No answer came.

"How tiresome!" she murmured and, obedient to Carlota's suggestion, noisily rattled the door knobs, listening at intervals for a voice within. "It must certainly be a very cracked old voice that belongs with such deaf ears!" she thought; then—was it imagination?—she seemed to catch a distant, sleepy "Adelante!" Still doubtful, but impatient, she turned the handle of the door: it opened readily on another desolate interior—dark, unfurnished, empty.

Now, for the first time, it occurred to her that she had mistaken the piso. And yet Carlota had saidwhat had Carlota said? The sixth floor or the fifth? Did she reckon the shop as number one? Remembering that PRIMERO half way up the ascent to Dolores' flat, Ray was seized with doubt. There ought to be a black lettered QUINTO outside, on the wall of the landing. She retraced her steps to see. But meanwhile, the outer door had swung heavily into place; as she approached it, the latch clicked softly. Unalarmed, she pulled the handle and tried the bolts. It was not to be supposed that a lock was ever so constructed that the unwary householder might any day be his own jailer! She had only to shift one of these little brass knobs . . . now, that was curious! What a nuisance it was to have such absurdly weak hands! A man's strong thumb could have slipped that catch with ease. . . . But her own, after repeated efforts, failed to move it. Undoubtedly, she was a prisoner.

Her heart was beating rapidly, as much from her exertions, however, as from any conscious state of panic; she lifted her bruised fingers to her flushed cheeks and reviewed the situation. If this was an unoccupied piso, to whom belonged that jug and glass? Although one room was empty—and a front room at that—it was through the transoms of the two other doors that the dim light drifted in: she quickly tried them both—and found both locked. But possibly, Señora Ruiz, leaving her castle burglar-proof, though apparently not impregnable, had departed like every one else, for the rogativa. In

that case, she would certainly return, in the course of the next few hours, and unlock the door; so, though it was very provoking and exceedingly inconvenient, there was really nothing to be feared. Unless—this was an afterthought—Mr. Russell should call

meanwhile in the Calle Mayor . . .

Setting her white teeth firmly, she attacked the latch again, wrenching and twisting it with feverish fingers; then she pulled out her hairpins—a woman's invaluable tools—and picked at it desperately until, being fashioned of delicate shell, one by one, they were broken in fragments. Bethinking herself next of her hatpin, she attempted to bend it to a loop; but the brittle steel snapped instantly and cruelly pierced her palm. She nursed the wound in silence with a forlorn little throb of self pity; and then, her thoughts naturally reverting to the sufferer downstairs, she hoped some kindly customer had looked in and lingered to play Samaritan. Presently, it occurred to her that with the arrival of this succor would come her best chance of immediate liberation -if only she could make herself heard; so at once she gave utterance to a succession of sweet, shrill cries, which were muffled by the encircling walls although the empty room behind gave back a plaintive echo. But now the sound of her own voice accomplished what nothing else had done so far: it frightened her! She drummed on the obdurate door with her tender, impotent fists; she threw herself against it, calling frantically for release; and with every wailing cry, her panic was intensified, till at last she was down on her knees and sobbing, with her lips against the keyhole.

Soon, however, that mood passed from her; in its place came a new courage, born of a reasonable hope. Leaving the dim hall for the equally gloomy chamber, she studied the fastenings of the tall French window. Like her own in the Calle Mayor, it was shuttered by solid wooden casements of which the paneled halves swung inward and were each trisected horizontally. The two lowest thirds were firmly bolted to the floor, and close above the bolt was driven a large nail that relentlessly held it in place; the middle thirds were barred with a stout lath, also nailed in position; the upper thirds were merely buttoned with a metal latch, but this was unfortunately beyond her reach. Clinging with one hand to the wooden bar and resting a small foot on the projecting nail, she could just touch it with the tip of her finger.

"Oh!" she yearned, with a last futile strain, "if I were only as tall as Peter!" Then, struck by the absurdity of the wish, she laughed bravely—laughed until she slipped and fell; but her eager glance, searching the dim, bare room for something wherewith to supply the deficient inches, was caught by a loose, bulging tile in the floor. Patiently disinterring this with the aid of her broken hatpin, she balanced it edgewise against the paneling, mounted it with a careful toe, sprung upward—and turned the latch. One shutter would have yielded now; but a hitherto unsuspected nail, in the upper casing of the window, arrested it almost immediately: she had gained nothing but a long vista of gray sky, scarcely four inches in width, and even this was obscured by a murky

pane in the outer casement. "But at least I can shatter that!" she fiercely cried, hurling the heavy tile with sure aim at the narrow opening. It crashed through and away into space, and the splintered glass tinkled down on the balcony floor. Too late she realized how deadly the missile might be, and with a chill of horror she listened—listened for an outcry in the street. None came, and she thanked Heaven; for her vivid fancy had pictured a bare-headed woman,

or a little passing child, struck down!

Deeply repenting the criminal thoughtlessness which might have eventuated in such a catastrophe, she leaned against the wall, subdued and pale; it was some time before she gathered energy to climb again and halloo through the broken window. Then, her voice rung weakly; she found it impossible, too, to reach the shattered opening with her lips, which were scarcely so high as the upper edge of the middle shutters. When her throat utterly failed, she tried to signal with her handkerchief, but succeeded only in cutting her soft wrist on the jagged points of glass; whereupon the flag of distress was necessarily put in requisition for surgical purposes. Disheartened and in pain, she subsided in a limp heap on the floor and drooped her head against the casement, closing her tear-filled eyes. The perfume of the crushed lilacs in her belt floated up to her, poignantly sweet. Again she felt a throb of weary pity—for her own self, sitting there.

A fresher, purer breath blew in through the broken pane; and, by and by, it was burdened with faint echoes—the incessant footsteps of a great multitude, the low murmur of reverent voices, the plaint of muted instruments, harmonious and solemn, and a recurring chant that softly rose, swelled, died away, and rose and failed again, at measured intervals. The rogativa was in progress, and its long procession of suppliants was trailing through the neighboring square with the bones of San Isidro. Ray started up and listened and understood; then—greatly chiding herself because she had needed the finger of superstition to point her to the One who always hears—she offered her own petition, and felt comforted.

Slowly, very slowly, the lagging hours went by; the lilacs breathed out their dying fragrance, the air blowing in at the broken window grew more fresh and moist and cool. Outside, the voices still murmured, the footsteps pattered, the solemn recurring chant arose and died. And within, Ray listened and hoped . . . and, being

very weary, fell asleep. . .

"Agua! San Isidro, agua! agua! agua!"

A hoarse voice, screaming uncouthly in the street below, woke her at last to a clearer realization of her predicament, and she bitterly repented her supineness during the precious forenoon. Already she was suffering from thirst and hunger—for, since dinner yesterday, nothing had passed her lips but a cup of coffee and a morsel of roll; with every hour, therefore, her strength must decrease and her voice weaken. So she bravely renewed her efforts at door and window, calling till her throat was sore, wrestling with the locks and bolts till her fingers ached and her wounded wrist began to trouble her

afresh. But of physical pain she was hardly conscious: the slow, hot tears that fell on the immovable nail above the casement bolt were drawn from her by a vision of the man she loved turning away from Dolores' door. "If I could see him for just one minute!" she sobbed, "just one minute to say goodbye!"

With the passing hours the room grew darker and darker: its gloom, to unaccustomed eyes would ere long have been impenetrable; but hers still pierced to the duskiest corners. When, however, her watch told her that it was half past six,—so Mr. Russell and Mrs. Dering must have started for the station,—she abandoned her piteous labors, for which the incentive was now taken away, and stretched herself miserably

on the cold, hard tiles.

It was conceivable that she might die here! And at that moment, the thought was not unwelcomeexcept for Louise's sake. She wondered dully why she had been born at all, if this was to be the end! Then out of her weary light-headedness, she evolved a curiously fatalistic theory to account for her being and becoming: doubtless she had been raised up, and educated, and brought over seas, and inspired to paint Dolores' portrait in order to save the far more useful life of the Spanish lad José-brave young breadwinner to a family of nine! The thought both humiliated and comforted her-if she had missed her share in the world's joy and success, she had at least taken her small part in its work. Pondering this, there came to her a sudden revelation of the interdependence of all human fates. "How strange!" she murmured dreamily, "I never realized before that every life must necessarily influence thousands of other lives, near at hand or half the world away—just as the spreading ripples on a lake intersect and modify each other. . . . Poor Carlota, she rippled into me disastrously! Because of her fall, I am here now . . . Still, she is not a bit more to blame than are my last pair of tan colored gloves for wearing out inopportunely. . . . That seems to prove that our intentions, only, will be laid to our last account. . . . And behind the cruelest chances, all things must be working together for good in the great Plan!"

This latter thought was still floating through her mind when there came a gentle splashing of raindrops on the window pane, and in the sibilant soft whisper, she heard a new reminder that if chance was ruled by Providence, Providence was not unmoved by prayer.

CHAPTER XXX

To the easy, harmless, well-meaning individual who glides through life contentedly in the line of least resistance, led on by the inclinations of others rather than impelled by any vital, springing force of his own, there is nothing so bewildering as the sudden necessity for a choice between two painful courses. Francisco's departure that afternoon, from the Calle Mayor, had been in the nature of a flight. He alone, of all the party gathered at Dolores' table, could have furnished a plausible explanation of the American girl's disappearance; but, in order to direct the suspicions of her friends toward the one person who had a powerful motive for interfering with her freedom of action, he would have been obliged to betray-and, by so doing, nullify-the wager between the two Silvelas. This would have been at the sacrifice of his honor as "a gentleman and a soldier" and, probably, of his intimacy with Don Enrique as well,—and the second consideration had not the least weight with him. Their present relations, resulting from Enrique's generous recognition of a timely service, were purely fortuitous; for professionally they had never been associated—one being the captain of a privileged corps, the other only a second lieutenant in a scrub regiment. The friendship, therefore, although of several months' growth,

was hardly of a nature to stand any considerable strain. But opposed to these deterring arguments was the magic influence of "a good deed in a naughty world." Had Portia's simile ever come within Francisco's ken, his eager fancy would doubtless have fitted it to Ray; for now, recalling the story Dolores had just told, he could find in his vocabulary no adequate tribute to her generosity. And that he should allow her to be victimized in any way by Teodoro's cupidity, appeared to him quite as reprehensible as the breaking of his plighted word.

"Valgame Dios!" he fretted distractedly, "either course I choose will be dishonorable!" and so, his military duties furnishing an excuse for some delay, he allowed the whole afternoon to slip by without

coming to any decision.

At dusk, returning shamefacedly to the Calle Mayor, he encountered Peter near the door and received from him the uncheering news that as yet no clue had been discovered. "That is," explained Peter, "none that leads anywhere," and went on to repeat the unsatisfactory testimony of the tobacconist and Manuela.

The newsgirl's tale, however, added tenfold to Francisco's suspicions. "What says Señor Rosail?" he demanded.

"Señor Rosail—" replied Peter, in his own queer Anglo-Spanish, "has vamoosed—gone on a false scent—lost himself. I haven't seen him since three o'clock. But Don Antonio, Mr. Stafford and I have been chasing an Inspector de Vigilancia. We have been three times to police headquarters, but the roga-

tiva seems to have demoralized—discomposed—disorganized them. . . . In plain English, such a set of thick-headed, punctilious, hair-splitting, redtape-tangling idiots I never saw in all my born days, and it's a satisfaction to tell you so even if you can't understand me!" and having thus relieved his feelings, he flung away down the street without waiting for a reply.

The young soldier gazed after him with troubled eyes, and instead of climbing dinnerward, as he had previously intended, turned on his heel and hastened, through the now fast falling rain, in the direction of the Palacio Real, not very far from which were quartered many of the officers of the royal guard—

among them, Don Enrique de Silvela.

For a constitutionally weak man to nerve himself to a decisive step requires almost as much courage as for a physical coward to overcome his panic under fire. Francisco's knees fairly quaked under him as he was ushered into Enrique's presence. The captain, with three of his brother officers was just seating himself at a well ordered dinner table, and the newcomer was cordially urged to join them, his feeble protests being promptly overruled. "For whether the caballero's errand was one of business or of pleasure, it could be ill sped on an empty stomach; and if an affair of the heart—as his looks would seem to indicate!—he must drink with them to the lady's health in a bumper of Tio Pepe, a vintage that needs no recommendation to a connoisseur." That Francisco was very far from being one, goes without saying; moreover, he was not a little awed by the company in

which he found himself,—his right hand neighbor was the nephew of a duke, and on the opposite side of the table sat the grandson of one of the richest noblemen in Spain. Painfully, the young provincial apprehended that he was about to close to himself forever this intoxicating vista into social altitudes far above his reach; for that Enrique would fail to resent the communication he was about to make, never for one moment dawned upon him. It was not without trepidation, therefore, that—the meal being concluded—he retired with his host to an adjoining room; and the captain's first remark was not calculated to encourage him.

"Well, Francisco mio, have you come to inform me that the little American has taken her departure from Madrid and that I am the richer by twenty

thousand duros?"

The lieutenant groaned miserably; he was always genially desirous of fulfilling the expectations of his friends, and the same easy complaisance that had prompted him to secure his father's business by marrying the co-heir to the family olive-farm now made him very loath to force any step that would be prejudicial to Enrique's interests. As he glanced up at the other's smiling face, all selfish considerations were forgotten. "I wish that it were so, caballero! I heartily wish that it were so!"

"Why, what has gone wrong?" asked the captain

kindly.

With a smothered "Everything!" Francisco proceeded to unbosom himself of his suspicions, and his heart sank lower before the swift hardening of his listener's face.

"You think, then, that my cousin is employing some unfair and cowardly ruse in order to carry out his boast?"

"It would certainly appear so, caballero! I fear he will try to compel the señorita to accompany him to the Fornos this very night. He probably realizes that it is the last opportunity, as her party leaves Madrid tomorrow. But of course, even if he should succeed, the malfeasance could be afterward proved and the

stakes would in honor be yours-"

"Not in honor!" interrupted the other harshly. "Por Dios, not in honor—it would be Judas money! And her American friends would be justly incensed! The affair must not be permitted to go so far!" He emphasized his words with a gesture so eloquent of indignation that Ray's champion, heartily concurring, inquired guilefully how it was to be prevented. "How?" echoed Enrique, who was now excitedly pacing the room. "Why, in but one way—a very simple way—a way I have tried before and that would have succeeded, if Teodoro had dreamed then that a small fortune was at stake. We must cancel that wager at once!"

"But do you realize, caballero, that as the winning

ticket belonged originally to your cousin-"

"I would stand to lose? Certainly. That is what makes it so simple," said Enrique. "For if my ticket, instead of being waste paper as usual, had won a prize of twenty thousand duros, a very nice point of honor would have been involved. The wager must then have stood. Assuredly you must see that! It is exceedingly fortunate that, as things are, no one need be a sufferer except myself."

At this speech, Francisco was very nearly excited to tears; with an ardent enthusiasm, that to an unsympathetic observer would have appeared ludicrously overdone, but which his companion recognized as entirely sincere, he wrung the captain's hand again and again, calling Heaven to witness that here was a man of chivalrous honor! a man of noble generosity! a man whose friendship it was his proud ambition to deserve! Then he poured out the history of José's substitute and declared that, although his esteemed companion's sacrifice was quite without a parallel, it was being made in a worthy cause; for such a tender hearted angel as the señorita had shown herself, he had never seen before and never looked to see again!

"And you the bridegroom of a month!" cried Enrique in laughing reminder, whereupon the enthusiast shrugged submissively and lifted a reproachful

palm.

The captain finally decided that, as the coolness arising from their recent discussion of the subject was still unbroken, a personal interview between Teodoro and himself would now be inadvisable; for, little as he desired to quarrel irrevocably, he might easily be provoked into expressing so much of his indignation as would make reconcilement forever impossible. "And we are the last of our line," he added simply. "But a letter can convey all that is needful, and—if you would lay me under still further obligation, Don Francisco—you will permit me to intrust it to your hands." So saying, he seated himself at an open desk, and drawing toward him a sheet

of paper, began thoughtfully and slowly to formulate a withdrawal from the wager on the ground that the doubtful and mysterious situation of the young foreigner precluded any chivalrous man from regarding her as a mere die in a game of hazard.

Francisco, from afar, watched him with wide, reverent eyes, dimly realizing that to the native instincts of this high-minded gentleman his own carefully fostered sense of honor was as pinchbeck is to gold. A few minutes later, armed with the letter and the fateful ticket—which, since the *sorteo* three days before, he had never trusted out of his personal keeping—he started out on his embassy, Enrique proposing to

accompany him as far as Teodoro's door.

Night had long ago closed in on the city. street lamps, shining through the falling rain, were set each one in a tremulous halo, and the wet pavements mirrored them all in long blurred streaks of yellow light. The air was full of pleasant watery sounds—a pattering and tinkling on the walls and window-panes, a dripping and splashing from the eaves, a trickling and purling in the gutters. Flitting, bat-like, over the sidewalks and hovering in flocks on the street corners, were umbrellas innumerable; but under one silken shelter the two young officers walked, arm in arm, till the Silvela mansion appeared in view. That great square building seemed, with the coming of the night, to be invested with an air of dignified antiquity: over the wide portal with its plaster coat of arms projected two wrought iron lamps, their fitful beams lighting up the weather worn device and the maimed supporters of the cracked and crumbling shield, and glistening down below in the puddles of the wet, uneven pavement. Here, opposite his family escutcheon, Enrique, who had suddenly grown gravely silent, paused abruptly, promising to await at the Café Fornos the reply to his proposition, and Francisco, through the smaller, unillumined side entrance, mounted faint-heartedly to beard the none-too-courteous Teodoro in his den.

Meanwhile, on the floor of that upper room in the Calle del Arenal, amid a darkness that could be felt, Ray sat with her dizzy head against the wall, her hands clasped close over her fluttering heart, her wide, aching eyes staring hotly at nothing, and her faith contending stoutly with her fears. She had been a prisoner for perhaps eleven hours; in all that time her friends must certainly have grown anxious; they must be seeking her even now—Peter and Dolores and Mr. Stafford; they would never rest till she was found. But how would they ever guess that she was here, all alone in this desolate dark cell?

Her horror of the solitude increased with every moment; the silence seemed to grow louder and louder till it roared in her ears. Then she lost all count of time: five minutes of this midnight seemed longer than an hour of day. But sleep was far from her. She sat motionless, listening, listening. . . .

All at once, in the direction of the hall, she heard a door creak softly and a cautious step shuffle over the threshold. A new fear seized upon her, and instead of calling out she held her breath lest it be overheard! But the step retreated as stealthily as it had come; as stealthily and as cautiously, it descended the narrow stair. Then Ray's voice and courage returned together; she demanded loudly, "Who is there?" and receiving no answer, though the footstep was yet audible, called again and again. Still the cautious foot descended, step by step, as though feeling its way through the darkness. She heard it so plainly, so very plainly, that . . . Groping, stumbling blindly, she finally reached the hall, where the outer door—stood open! Her blind hands mistook it for the immovable partition till it swung gently under her touch. And now she was out on the landing and feeling her own way down the

unlighted stair!

Four steep, awkward flights, and then a cheering gleam from the passage below—the passage leading out to the street. Her eyes, so long used to the dark, blinked painfully in the pale rays of the smoky, illtrimmed lamp affixed to the dingy wall; but her vision soon clearing, she perceived, between herself and the outer door, the huddled figure of a man-an old man with grizzled hair and bleared black eyes, who gazed at her stupidly as she passed him. At his feet was a stone jug-strangely familiar!-and, in his unsteady hand, a thick glass half full of a dark red liquor. The strong fumes from it, and from the uncorked jug, mingled unpleasantly with the odor of bad kerosene in the smoky lamp and the aroma, all-pervading, of stale garlic. But the outer door yawned to the street. And though the rain poured steadily, and though she was bareheaded—for her hat and the broken pins were all upstairs, forgotten,—she hurried giddily out and lifted her face to the sky. Then the cool fresh drops, beating softly on her forehead, convinced her that, in very truth, she was at liberty!

In the Calle Mayor, Russell, who during the last few hours had grown hollow-eyed and gaunt, was just starting out again in the forlorn hope of finding Ray at one of the city's hospitals. At the foot of the stairs he paused to leave a message for Mr. Stafford with the much-distressed portero, whose unread newspaper, lying across his knees, had lost all its wonted fascination. Tonito, squatting on his heels beside the old man's chair, listened with sharp ears to the instructions—in order to be prompter to his grandfather. But to the very young, concentration of mind is quite unnecessary,—at ten or even eleven years, the unworn faculties are often quite divergently and efficiently applied, --. Tonito's tongue and sticky fingers were busy with a hoarded sweet, his little snub nose enjoyingly sniffed the fragrance of Russell's cigar, and his bright eyes watched the open doorway for the glitter of the raindrops as they fleetingly mirrored the lights inside. Suddenly, through his fritula-stoppered lips, burst an inarticulate squeal of surprise, and a small brown finger pointed frantically.

Russell's gaze swiftly followed it, and in the door he saw her standing—a benighted Ray, pale and wan and half extinguished by the pelting, pouring rain, with her damp unbraided hair streaming darkly around her face. Once before he had seen her thus, and had felt a strange desire to gather her close in his arms and bear her away to some safe haven, afar from the press and the struggle and all life's cruel chances. And so, for a moment, he mistook her for a memory.

But now she was staring back at him with wide gray eyes full of bewildered joy. "You stayed!" she hoarsely exulted, "you stayed to hunt for me!" Then, as she held forth her hands to him, he knew that his

longing might come true.

There were eighty-nine steps to be climbed before Dolores, in motherly ecstacy, could claim her from him; and Russell thanked Heaven and the architect for every one!

Of the three other members of the household who, returning presently in great discouragement, were greeted by the portero with the happy tidings, none appeared to rejoice more heartily than Don Antonio. For several hours he had been unwearied in his efforts to untangle the red tape which Peter execrated; and now, without lingering to hear from Dolores more than the bare outlines of her charge's story, he immediately went out again to telephone the police and put a period to the official search. This accomplished, instead of returning homeward, he pressed on with all speed toward the Café Suizo. This nightly haunt of many another grave and reverend señor is located—as we have said before—directly opposite the Café Fornos. So it happened, not unnaturally, that as he hurried up the Alcalá he encountered two young officers who had just emerged from

the last named resort and were directing their steps toward the Calle Mayor. In the bright glare of a near-by street lamp, they recognized each other, whereupon inquiries and explanations followed fast.

The señorita, declared Don Antonio, had made her appearance not more than fifteen minutes ago, greatly shaken in nerve but otherwise none the worse for her adventure—which, as it proved, was entirely due to a refractory lock and her own too-fearless disposition. "But you will hold me excusable, caballeros, if I leave you to learn the details from our friends. I have just time left me to fulfil an engagement with one of the champion chess players of Madrid; and, since our little Reina has timed her return so opportunely, you must pardon me if my anxieties are now chiefly concerned with the movements of my adversary's queen!" So saying, and chuckling happily over his own wit, he hurried on.

For a moment or two, neither of the young officers gave expression to his secret thought. Then, in a burst of bewilderment, Francisco cried: "Don Enrique, if, after all, I have meddled only to your injury, I can never pardon myself the blunder!"

Enrique took his arm in a reassuring clasp. "We must hear the whole story before we upbraid ourselves, amigo. But I confess that Teodoro's message has somewhat shaken my own suspicions.—You are quite sure there was nothing in his manner to confirm yours?"

Despairingly Francisco shrugged. "Por Dios! I do not know. He expressed no surprise either at the señorita's disappearance or at your action, and his reply was just what I have given you: 'Tell my

cousin that if he is such a fool as to throw away twenty thousand duros for a chivalrous whim worthy of the crack-brained knight of La Mancha, I am not such an idiot as to refuse to profit by his folly:"

"Ah, well," said the other calmly, "if when I come to die, my conscience be no heavier than Don Quixote's, I am quite content meanwhile to live as poor." Then over them both there fell a silence that remained unbroken till they had turned into the Calle Mayor.

It was from Peter that they obtained the particulars—a very exuberant Peter, whose intense relief inclined him to regard with lenity even the delinquent who had tendered neither advice nor assistance during the search. To the captain he was cordiality itself, for Enrique had explained—in his careful, courteous English—that he had the honor to be an acquaintance of the señorita, had indeed meditated offering his services to her friends, but was most happy now to be able to present congratulations instead.

"You bet they're quite in order," declared Peter heartily, becoming recklessly idiomatic on discovering a hearer who appeared conversant with his native tongue, "but we don't deserve a particle of credit. The whole thing turns out to be only another of Miss Ray's justifiable scrapes. On an errand of mercy, you must know, she broke and entered in a perfectly strange house that had a unique sort of trap instead of a burglar alarm; and if it hadn't been that the place was the private cache of a bibulous old portero whose daughter-in-law drew a pretty tight

rein, she might be there at this minute: but the jolly old boy—thinking it was about time for another drink—trotted upstairs and unlocked the door."

Enrique looked mystified. "Pardon me, caballero, but I do not follow you. You say the señorita was imprisoned?—and by whom?" he demanded sternly.

"Eh?" said Peter. "Oh, no! I thought I had explained. It was altogether an accident, such as befell that unfortunate bride who got into the chest—perhaps you remember her name, for I don't. But I'd better begin at the beginning," which he did, and this time was rather more explicit. The captain interrupted him again and again, translating for Francisco's ear each reply that was given him.

"This glove shop, you say, is on the Arenal? And the proprietress, does she call herself Carlota Vel-

asco?"

"That's the one! An awfully goodlooking crea-

ture. Too bad she should have hurt herself!"

"Ah, yes," agreed Enrique, "it will doubtless be regretted by a large clientèle which she regularly supplied with gloves and—lottery tickets. Was the señorita present when the accident occurred?"

"No," said Peter, "but it must have happened only a short time before, for not more than a half hour could have elapsed between her first and second visits

to the shop."

"Her first and second visits?"

"Yes; she left it to avoid speaking to a young scamp who has annoyed her on several occasions—a fellow by the name of Silvela," explained Peter, who had only half listened to Francisco's introduction.

"I know him," said the captain grimly, and during the remainder of the narrative, he had no more questions to ask.

But afterward, when he and the lieutenant were again on the street, and sharing the privacy of a single umbrella, he laughed a short low laugh of mingled amusement and chagrin. "Well, Francisco mio, you and I are of one feather," he declared, "and that cousin of mine, with an ingenuity most diabolical, has caught us both in the same snare! Take it not amiss if I say that you have played a good Sancho to my Quixote. But in one point even La Mancha's knight would have the laugh on me: his Dulcinea's disenchantment was to be effected at the cost of three thousand and three hundred stripes on the shoulders of his honest squire; but the price of our fair lady's liberation has been twenty thousand duros out of my knightly pocket! Nevertheless, I give you my word that not for ten times that amount would I have Teodoro's conscience in my bosom-or Carlota's either."

"Then you think-"

"That the ticket which you delivered into my cousin's hands was the key which unlocked that door! I believe now that he had no hope of carrying out his bet, but only of playing on our fears. He devised this little comedy and we have filled just the rôles which he assigned to us! However, I can prove nothing. And I have no desire to prove aught—against a Silvela! The sooner you can forget the whole affair, my friend, the better you will please me."

"But they—" exclaimed Francisco, with a backward nod, "they have no such suspicion!"
"Most fortunately," replied the captain. "Tomorrow they leave Madrid. Let them remember us as kindly as they can!"

CONCLUSION

The hour of departure had arrived; in the Calle Mayor an omnibus was waiting at the señora's door, and in the lower hall was a heap of hand luggage, over which Tonito—in an unprecedented state of affluence—mounted guard. Upstairs, on the third piso, many last words and goodbyes had been spoken—some with kindly cheerfulness, some tenderly sorrowful; and now, one after another, the travelers descended to the street. Peter was the first to leave, talking gaily with Francisco and throwing a kiss to Benita as he looked back at the turn of the stair; the Staffords followed next, with Don Antonio in courteous attendance; but Ray and Russell lingered while Dolores held a hand of each.

"Adios, my children; you have not been like strangers under my roof, but for these three months as my own family. And now you are going away, and my heart and my home will be empty! But in the days to come, hija mia, you must think sometimes of your Spanish mother, for while she lives she will never cease to think of you, to pray for you both—and to bless the saints that an old woman's meddling was not permitted to mar your lives. Oh, my children, hold fast to your love!—and cherish it!

that it may grow stronger with the passing years, and abide with you forever. . . Once more,

farewell! Vayan con Dios!"

A few moments later, the omnibus rattled away down the Calle Mayor; and Ray—with her hand close clasped in that of the man beside her—gazed back through a mist of tears at the silver haired woman who was watching them out of sight.

